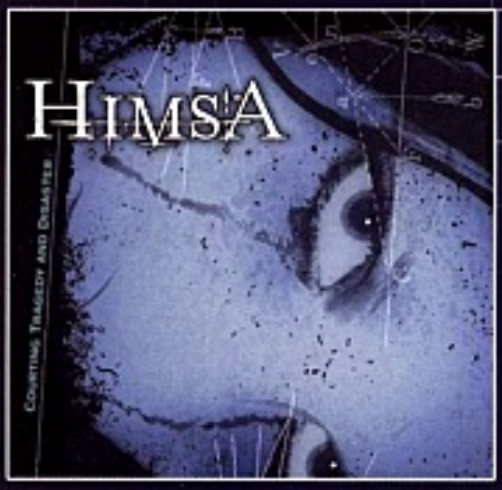
HORROR COMICS MOVIES ANIME MUSIC REVIEWS
VAMPIRELLA®
COMICS MANIFESTO
GHOST IN THE SHELL
MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER
LOVECRAFT
GAIMAN & MCKEAN
THE OFFSPRING
FALLEN ANGEL
MIDNIGHT MASS
SEDUCED BY MIDNIGHT
MY FLESH IS COOL
TWO TWISTED TALES
BY JEFF PARKER
AND
PALMIOTTI, GRAY, REARTE
BLOODY VIXENS ON A RAMPAGE
VAMPIRELLA MAGAZINE #3
$3.95 U.S.
0 27172 21030 5
00311
www.vampirella.com

CANNAE | HORROR

BOSTON'S CANNAE SLUG IT OUT WITH *HORROR*. METAL FAST AND BRUTAL THE WAY YOU LIKE IT! PRODUCED BY ADAM D. (KILLSWITCH ENGAGE).

ON TOUR NOW!

HIMSA



COURTING TRAGEDY AND DISASTER

"AS *TRICKY & TREACHEROUS AS METALLIC HARDCORE, AS BARE KNUCKLED & BREATHLESS AS TECH-THRASH, IT MATTERS NOT WHEN IT COMES TO PRESENT DAY* **HIMSA**, *FOR THE DIVIDES BETWEEN METAL & HARDCORE ARE SCOFFED AT AS SIMPERING SEMANTICS*"
-METAL MANIACS

lamb of god

AS THE PALACES BURN

Produced by
Devin Townsend
(Strapping Young Lad)

"Hard to believe one band could have so many good ideas, ideas perfectly arranged into accessible yet hardly commercial music."
-Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles (9/10)

ALSO AVAILABLE

CALIBAN
Shadow Hearts

CREMATORIUM
For All Our Sins...

SCREAMING AUDIO
Vol. 1

PROSTHETIC RECORDS

Prosthetic Records - 11664 National Blvd, #413 Los Angeles, CA 90064 - www.prostheticrecords.com

LeRoi, Inc. and Great Dane Records

LeRoi.com • TitaniumBlack.com • RockConfidential.com

proudly sponsor the
hottest metal band of 2004—

Titanium Black

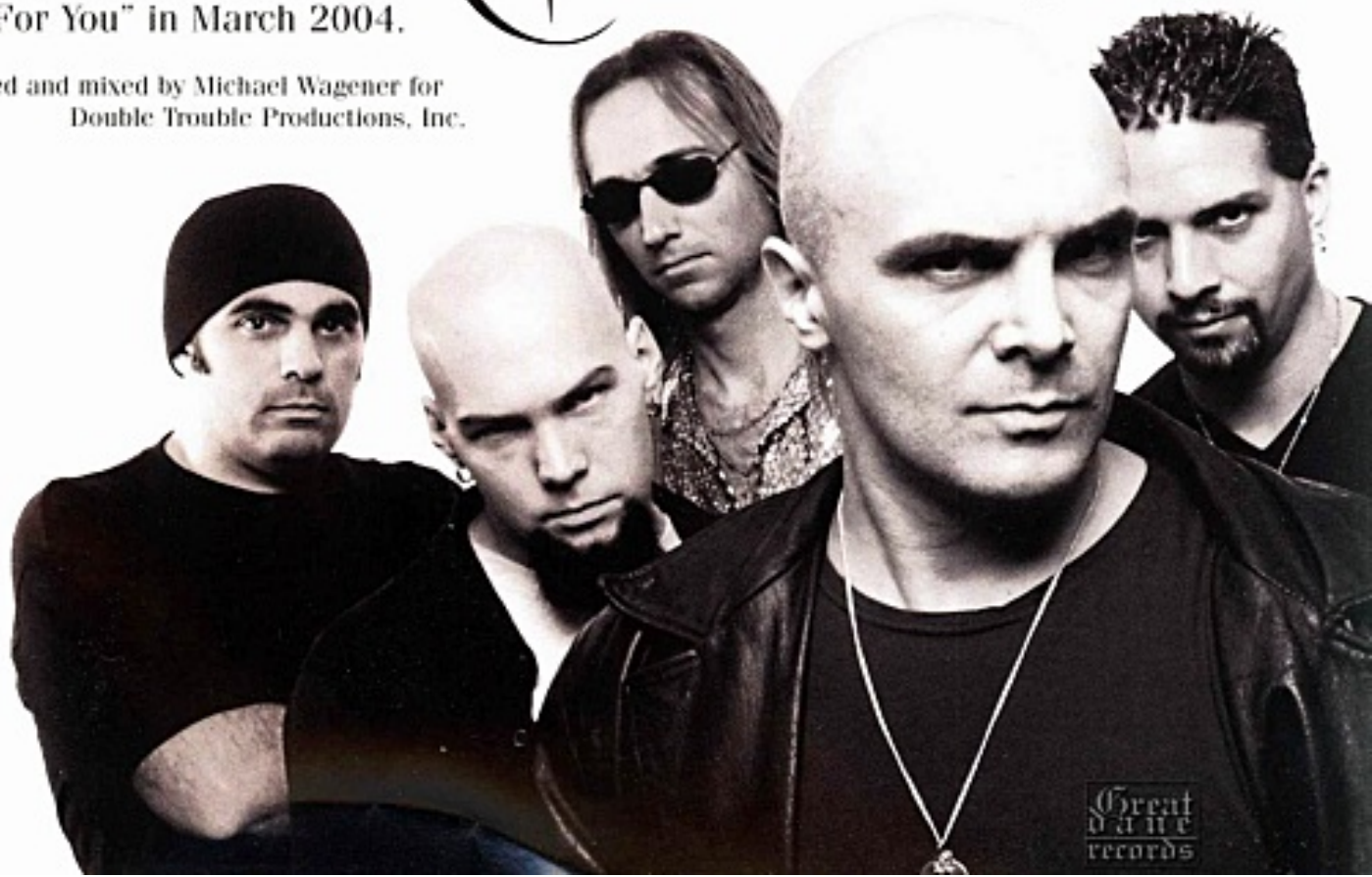
watch for details!

Check out exclusive features on Titanium Black at RockConfidential.com– the hottest music website!

TITANIUM BLACK

Titanium Black's
Debut Album will
"Bleed For You" in March 2004.

Produced and mixed by Michael Wagener for
Double Trouble Productions, Inc.



LeRoi, Inc. • P.O. Box 212 • 2804 State Route 48 • Mineola • New York • 11315
LeRoi, Inc. Titanium Black, 2004-2004. All Rights Reserved

BLACK SABBATH
THE DARK TRUTH

COHEED AND CAMBRIA
SCREAMO SPACE CADETS

THE DARKNESS
CONQUER AMERICA

KORN
EVIL!

KILLSWITCH ENGAGE
SNEAK PREVIEW

REVOLVER

The world's loudest rock magazine!

Special Collector's Edition

10 YEARS GONE

KURT COBAIN

REQUIEM FOR A SCREAM

+

The Tragic Story of Grunge

With

ALICE IN CHAINS,
PEARL JAM, SOUNDGARDEN
...AND MORE!

DEICIDE
THE OFFSPRING
GOD FORBID
COURTNEY LOVE

APRIL 2004 No. 31 $5.95 US $6.95 CAN

0 09281 01275 7

On sale now!

Photo: Stephen Sicklar; Krista Baker's Make up & Hair: Duke

BLOODBANK

PAGE 13 SPLINTER EFFECT
WRITER BRIAN WOOD
PROPOSES HIS MANIFESTO

PAGE 19 VAMPIRELLA MUST DIE PART THE THIRD
THE CHASE IS ON AND VAMPIRELLA
IS THE TARGET

PAGE 30 DEMON CRAWL
AUTHOR JOHN SHIRLEY
DISSECTS CYBERPUNK HORROR

PAGE 33 STONE'S THROW
INVESTIGATE MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER

PAGE 36 VAMPIRELLA: HATE MAIL
VAMPIRELLA BREAKS
DOWN A WITCH'S CURSE

PAGE 7 VAMPED
THUS SPAKE VAMPI

PAGE 8 SCARLET LETTERS
WORDS TO LIVE BY

PAGE 10 IN VEIN
SUCCULENT MORSELS FOR YOU

PAGE 15 THE VAULT
WE READ AND WATCH.
YOU DECIDE

PAGE 44 NEW BLOOD
THE NEWEST COMICS SACRIFICES

PAGE 48 HELLS BELLS
MUSIC SOOTHES
THE SAVAGE BREAST

PAGE 50 LUNA-CHICKS
WE DON'T EXPLAIN THEM,
WE JUST ACCEPT THEM

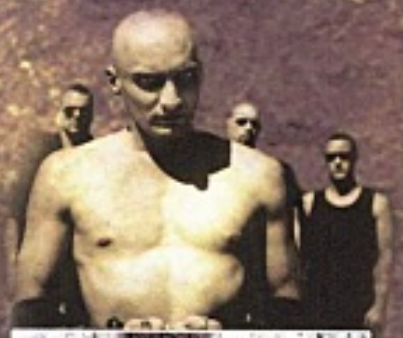
CENTURY MEDIA RECORDS

STAMPIN' GROUND

A NEW DARKNESS UPON US

THE UK'S MOST PUNISHING HARDCORE ACT RETURN! PRODUCED BY ANDY SNEAP (KILLSWITCH ENGAGE, ARCH ENEMY, NEVERMORE).

WWW.STAMPINGROUND.FO.CO.UK



TIAMAT

PREY

"GLORIOUS GOTH-ROCK THAT'LL HAVE FANS OF SISTERS OF MERCY MOONSPELL ECT. ALL SWOONING."
-4K REVIEW KERRANG!

WWW.CHURCHOFTIAMAT.COM

dark tranquillity

LIVE DAMAGE DVD

THE 1ST EVER DVD RELEASE FROM ONE OF SWEDEN'S FINEST ACTS FEATURES OVER THREE HOURS WORTH OF CRUSHING LIVE FOOTAGE.

WWW.DARKTRANQUILLITY.COM

DIMENSION ZERO

PENETRATIONS FROM THE LOST WORLD

REISSUE OF THEIR DEBUT ALBUM. FEATURING NEW ARTWORK, COVER SONG BONUS TRACKS AND A LIVE SET.

GODFORBID

THE NEW ALBUM - GONE FOREVER - 2/24/2004

CENTURY MEDIA

AVAILABLE AT samgoody

Available in stores or go to www.centurymedia.com for online ordering, tour dates, MP3's, ect.

VAMPIRELLA

EXECUTIVE PUBLISHER Jonathan Rheingold
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER Yoshi Aino

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Maureen McTigue
ART DIRECTOR Ivan Reynoso

ASSISTANT EDITOR Boni Alimagno
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR/DESIGNER Jason Brightman
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT Daniel 'B2K' Kang

CONTRIBUTORS: Avalon Studios, Jim Catapano, Justin Gray, Patrick Keller, Tom LaSusa, Phil Noto, Jimmy Palmiotti, Steven Parke, Jeff Parker, Gabriel Rearte, Zena Tsarfin

THANKS: Kitana Baker, Melissa Brennan, Sean Fernald, Lee Dawson, Joe Gentile, Brian Haberlin, Patricia Jeres, Jeff Mariotte, Adam Philips, Fleetwood Robbins, John Shirley, Beau Smith, Francis Takenaga, Ville Valo, Brian Wood, Alexxus Young, Larry Young

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Judd Silver
ADVERTISING SALES Alana Zinn

CIRCULATION/MARKETING DIRECTOR Richard Fogel
SINGLE COPY SALES MANAGER Richard Ciotta
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Dennis M. Wheeler
DIRECTOR OF PRE PRESS Phil Dhom

PUBLISHER Stanley Harris
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER Warren Sherman

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING OFFICES
1115 Broadway, New York, NY 10010
(212) 807-7100; FAX (212) 620-7787
Email: mail@vampirella.com
Website: www.vampirella.com

COVER CREDITS
Newsstand cover by Steven Parke
Painted cover by Phil Noto
Alternate illustrated cover by Jeff Parker
Kitana Baker cover photography: Lorinda Sullivan

VAMPIRELLA COMICS MAGAZINE #3
is published by Harris Publications, Inc.
1115 Broadway, New York, NY 10010
© 2004 Harris Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
PRINTED IN CANADA.
Vampirella is © and ® Harris Publications, Inc.
All outside material is © their respective owners and used with permission.

VAMPED

Another year creeps up on us, snaking through the grass of December to spring out on a cold night and reveal its fang of midnight glory. As the first month unfolds, anticipating new and exciting events, things and people, we reflect on what has past hoping not to hold on to it, not wanting it to cloud our judgment of potential new glories.

The world of horror will once again revel across all manner of works, as new movies, books, games and televisions shows burst forth from the twisted minds of those who birth them, like Athena burst forth from Zeus. It's a great year for movies with a scare bent. Starting with this spring's *Hellboy* and *Van Helsing*, and working into *The Chronicles of Riddick* and *Blade: Trinity* and more, it's gonna be a hell of a good time.

There are always good books released of a horror bent. Whether reissues of classics like Stephen King's *Cujo*, or something new from Laurell K. Hamilton, a new short story collection, there is something for every nightstand. And the comics just keep on coming. There's no stopping Steve Niles, that's for sure. Check out In Vein this month to see some of the new projects he has in the works.

We'll be watching TV a lot this year. The Horror Channel will hit cable services later this year. *WonderFalls* by the creator of *Dead Like Me* is slated for release on Fox. Don't think that new series fits here? Well, it's all about a young woman who is hearing voices and they tell her what to do. Those voices may be God, or may be gods, or they just may be medication kicking in, she doesn't know, but she does know that little porcelain animals are talking to her... trust me on this one.

The slinky, sexy way a year has for getting the best of you, hiding around the dark corner, jumping out with a new surprise when you least expect it. You should always expect something, honey, then you won't get caught breathless, you'll be a step ahead of the fear, the fear that hovers on the outskirts of your mind. It's always there, isn't it? That fear, the fear that something will go wrong, that something will happen, something that you can't control. For isn't control what we're all after? To control is to be beyond the fear. To control is move past the horror.

But no one is ever really in control. And that's just the way I like it.

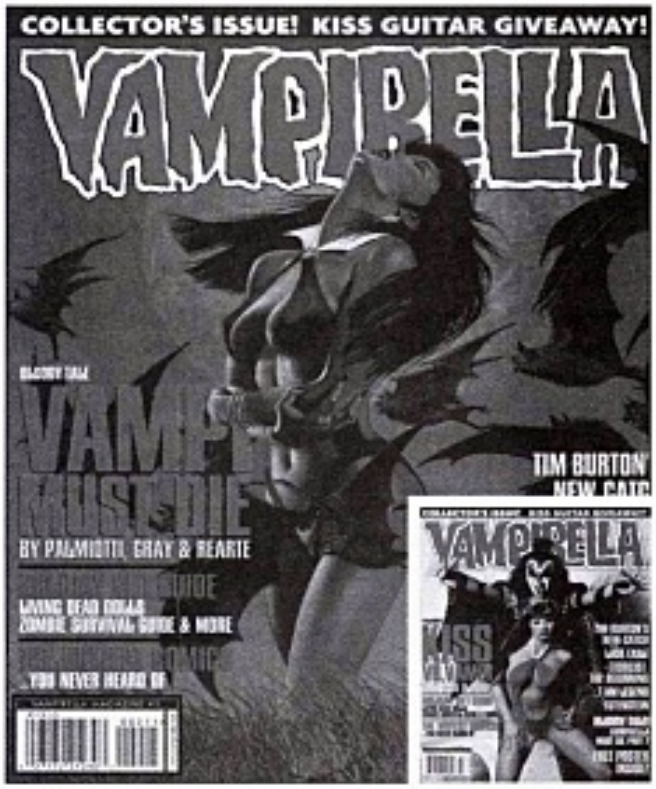
What's your favorite moment? That moment that makes your heart jump, that makes your blood boil. What way do you like it?

Come on, tell me. It'll be our little secret.

Vampirella

SCARLET LETTERS

titilating tomes



I am so happy that the "Queen of Comics" is back in action in the Comics Magazine. Vampirella is just a kick-butt chick, and I thank all the creators and writers of Vampirella for giving the public such a great hero.Thanks!!
Love a True Vampi fan,
Matthew Benge
Pensacola, Fl

DEAR HARRIS,
I wanted to say that I love the new magazine format!! It has much more potential for possibilities than the comic. Two Vampirella stories in every issue is a great idea! Just don't start reprinting stories and covers the way Warren did, or you might find a lynch mob outside! Kitana is hot! She was born to be Vampirella!
The review of the new iron maiden album was right on the money! Whoever surmised that Vampirella fans would also be into heavy metal is a genius
Sincerely,
Bruce Williamson

Wow! Vampirella Magazine #1 was a superb publication filled with excitement and adventure! I had to toss aside my Gothic Beauty magazine for this issue, because we all know that Kitana Baker aka Vampirella is the true gothic beauty! The first story "Vampirella the Killing Floor" was brilliantly done by writer and artist Steve Lieber! I said to myself..."they put the best story in first" and to my surprise I get another story just as good called "Vampirella Most Die" and it's in color! This story was amazing, instead of the dark shadowy kind of story, you had Vampirella in the mix with a strange superheroish alien that crash lands in Central Park! With Vampirella anything can happen and does!
I was bragging about this issue on the Internet and received an email from a strange bloke by the name of Barnabas Collins. He says in his email that Vampirella Magazine #1 will topple magazines like Rolling Stone, Sports Illustrated, US and Fortean Times because Vampirella has an erotic appeal that gives us stories that are fine tuned (no need for Rolling Stone), athletic (have you seen Kitana? With a body like that she makes the finest women athletics look pale in comparison! - no need for Sports Illustrated); celebrity voyeurism (who needs US, when the only celeb we need is Kitana?) and the strange and paranormal
(the things that happen in Vampirella are far more stranger than anything that can be found in Fortean Times). I have to agree with Barnabus, this is one guy that knows his stuff! Keep on with this fine magazine, I will be waiting in the wings for the next issue!
Sincerely yours,
Paul Dale Roberts, Publisher
Jazma Universe Online
http://www.jazmaonline.com/

You all you know who Barnabas Collins is, right?-Vamp

HOWDY TO SCARLET LETTERS:
Just picked up the first issue of the new Magazine Format and I got to say it is very nice. The articles were insightful and the two stories were great. Really brought Vampirella back to us in a great way.
Thanks a lot and I look forward to lots more from her and you.
Larry Stanley
Editor PCU (Penguin Comics and Movies)

DEAR SCARLET LETTERS,
I can't believe how cool the new Vampirella magazine is! Vampirella Magazine #2 had lots of neat adverts. I don't mind adverts as long as they fit in with the whole style of the Magazine and they do and I have checked some websites from them. I would like to see a Vampirella tale based on the 1977 Punk Rock scene in England.
Brendan Walsh
Chicago, IL

I have been waiting to find this comic for years, my older brother used to read it when I was a kid and I got into reading it as well. I still have been able to find only the first issue and was wondering how to subscribe. Thanks for the excellent 1st issue.
Joshua Miles

This month, we give props to Augie De Blieck, Jr. from ComicBookResources.com for his positive viewing of Vampirella Magazine. He 'gets it,' so to speak. Johanna Draper-Carlson reviews it as well, on ComicsWorthReading.com and, while she acknowledges that she's not the audience for it, points out our more grammatical errors. And we appreciate that. We'll be more careful in the future.
Couple of fantastic artists joining us this month, covering us if you will. Jeff Parker, writer and artist on his own The INTERMAN, provides the stellar "Hate Mail" in luscious black and white.

Check out parkerspace.com for more on Jeff. He's one of our favorite guys. Our snazzy "photo-it's not a photo-sure it's a photo cover" is by artist Steven Parke. You can check out more of Steve's work in the Vertigo graphic novels I, Papparazzi and In the Shadow of Edgar Allan Poe. He brings a fascinating style to his work, and to his models. In fact, check out this month's Luna Chick; that's his work there, too. He can be found at www.imagecarnival.com.
Phil Noto has made his mark as a great girl artist. His work has appeared in Wildstorm's *Danger Girl* and on the covers of DC's *Wonder Woman*. His own www.notoart.com has loads more.
For all their work, and for all the comics covered within, give 1-888-COMIC-BOOK a call for the special retailer near you.

SCARLET LETTERS, VAMPIRELLA COMICS MAGAZINE, 1115 BROADWAY 8TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10010, OR VIA E-MAIL AT COMICS©HARRIS-PUB.COM

GET CAUGHT IN THIS WEB!

VAMPIRELLA
STORE
SCARLET LEGION
EBAY
MESSAGE BOARD
PHOTOS
FEATURES
ISSUES
RETAILERS
VAMPIRELLA MAGAZINE
PREMIERE ISSUE IN STORES NOW!
MILLER LITE GIRL GETS VAMPED!
ALAN MOORE
WIN A VAMPIRELLA GUITAR!
WIN A SPECIAL EDITION BC RICH MOCKINGBIRD GUITAR FROM HARRIS COMICS AND BC RICH.
ON SALE NOW
ON SALE NOW
ON SALE NOW
VAMPIRELLA COMICS MAGAZINE
THIS OCTOBER, VAMPIRELLA RETURNS TO HER MAGAZINE PUBLISHING ROOTS
» Vampirella Comics Magazine #1 on sale now!
» New Vampirella Guitar desktop images
» The Ballad of Frankie and Vampi daily comic strip
» History Repeated
» Vampirella Meets the Frankenstein Mobster
» Who is Vampirella
» The Costume Conundrum
VAMPIRELLA #21:
John Smith, Javier Pina and Jimmy Palmiotti covers by Amanda Conner & Jimmy Palmiotti and Jason Alexander (Painted) Blood & Roses Part 3 of 3
It's Vampirella vs. the Zombies is a last ditch effort to escape the machinations of the evil Dr. Kessler. A busted soul-eater, a second story jump, the undead getting their revenge and a love that defies even death all get tossed into the mix for this issue!
» Buy it | » Preview it
Vampirella / Dracula: The Centennial-David Mack Edition
Celebrate the 100th anniversary of Bram Stoker's Dracula with this outstanding three story anthology.
VAMPIRELLA MODEL

CHECK OUT

WWW.VAMPIRELLA.COM

VIOLENT TENDENCIES

Neil Gaiman writes in his introduction to the newest edition of his and Dave McKean's first collaboration, the graphic novel *Violent Cases*, "This is where it started; this was where it began."

To understand exactly what was started in 1987 is to understand the immense significance of this book's reissuing by Dark Horse Comics. We can look back at the works born of their now 17-year long collaboration and wonder at how easily the miraculous alchemy of Gaiman's peculiar, daring ideas and McKean's frenetic but eloquent visuals came together. Paul Gravett who was editing the British magazine *Escape* at the time liked Gaiman's journalism and McKean's art and asked if they wanted to work together on a five-page strip. Gaiman writes "We talked about what we wanted to do: a comic for people who didn't read comics...something we could show our friends, and that our friends would read, and, if we were lucky, respect." Their communication took on an organic feel with Gaiman writing out the story as prose and McKean reinterpreting it into images. The back and forth evolved the five page strip into a 48-page graphic novel that captured the pair's sensibilities. Both poignant and disturbing, the story's a continually morphing recollection of Gaiman as a child meeting Al Capone's osteopath. He writes about a place where fact and fiction become one and truth no more substantial than fog. Such themes foreshadow their later work in which would they would continue redefining each other and the medium itself into new often horrifying territory with *Black Orchid* and *The Sandman*. And to think, it all started here, as two unknowns found their first big break together. – *Boni Alimagno*

CRAFTY

If you've ever read an H.P. Lovecraft story, chances are you've thought of the man himself – or at least to his state of mind. Was the 20th century writer the keeper of some dark and arcane knowledge that he hid in plain sight in his short stories? Or was he a literary madman, capable of generating a myriad of mythologies, yet unable to truly exist in his own world? Maybe it was the fact his mom made him wear dresses because she always wanted a girl (you weren't expecting that). In *Lovecraft*, a new missive published by Vertigo (from a Hans Rodionoff screenplay), comic writer Keith Giffen (*Lobo*) and artist Enrique Breccia (*Che*) weave a dark tale of historical facts from H.P.'s bizarre upbringing and awkward adult life with a brilliant but twisted fictitious backdrop – where the Necronomicon, Arkham, Mass., and the elder Gods exist just beyond the borders of reason. After his father's death in a mental institution, H.P. becomes keeper and guardian of the ancient book of the dead. He writes his tales in hopes of sating the hungers of the "unimaginable horrors" bound by the tome. But it's a losing battle, one where Lovecraft must dive into the mouth of madness, forsaking all hopes of a normal life. It's a choice that only a madman, or the secret savior of the world, could make. – *Tom LaSusa*

Violent Case ™ & © Gaiman McKean; Lovecraft published by DC Comics; Tru Calling ™& © Fox Entertainment; Kolchak The Night Stalker

HOLLYWOOD HORROR

The reemergence of horror as a media mainstay continues in the new year. Horror maven Clive Barker is set to bring his *Tortured Souls* to life. The Barker-helmed feature from Universal will bring the six creatures in contact with a human who must escape from the demon realm.

Former vampire slayer Sarah Michelle Gellar is heading to Japan to film *The Grudge*, an adaptation of the Japanese film series, *Ju-On*, an atypical haunted house story where the incidents that have effected the house's owners infect the house. The film's original writer/director, Takashi Shimizu, will front the American version.

Another slayer keeps her place on the small screen as Eliza Dushku's *Tru Calling* was picked up for a full season on Fox, as well as picking up Jason Priestley for a guest role.

The WB has been in talks with producer Dan Curtis to revive the vampire soap opera, *Dark Shadows* once again. The extremely popular gothic series, which aired from 1966 –1971, still has hardcore fans.

Horror comics hero, writer Steve Niles, will conquer the world...OK, maybe not, but after selling four comics properties (*30 Days of Night*, *Criminal Macabre*, *Wake the Dead*, and *Hyde*) to film studios, he has joined with music monster Rob Zombie to create Creep Entertainment, a production studio dedicated to producing horror flicks. Their combined experience makes Creep the new House of Horror to watch. Their first planned comics-to-film productions include the upcoming Dark Horse Comic, *The Nail* and IDW's *Bigfoot*. *The Lords of Salem* will combined their shared passions of comics and music, and tell the tale of a satanic band.

DARK NIGHT DETECTIVE

Decades before *The X-Files* or *Buffy* crossed the minds of their creators, another monster hunter graced TV. In 1972's *The Night Stalker*, Carl Kolchak followed stories of mysterious murders to their natural conclusion: death by vampire. The original story by Jeff Rice, published as *The Kolchak Papers*, introduced a reporter who had seen his share of the beat, but was having a whole new dimension open up as he investigated stories that didn't seem to add up in any normal sense of the world. Gauntlet Press brings that movie, and two others, back to life in *Richard Matheson's Kolchak Scripts*. This mammoth collection contains introductions and information on all three scripts written by author Matheson, known for his extensive science fiction and horror contribution including the seminal vampire tale *I am Legend*. Quotes from Matheson, producer Dan Curtis, star Darren McGavin (*A Christmas Story*) and others beautifully illustrate the creative process and the behind-the-scenes adventures bringing something as unique as Kolchak to television.

ANIME HAUNTINGS

Everything about *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* from the setting, the story and the animation can be summed up in two words: Cutting edge.

Created by Shirow Masamune (*Dominion Tank Police, Appleseed*) and produced by Production I.G. (the company behind *Kill Bill*'s animated sequence) *Ghost in the Shell: SAC* is not only visually stunning but mentally stimulating as well. (Think *Matrix* without the drama.) If you've never read the manga or seen the movie, don't worry. *Stand Alone Complex* takes place in a parallel universe of the *Ghost in the Shell* world, basically as if the movie never happened.

Ghost in the Shell: SAC is a world where people can gain superhuman strength, sight, and speed, where hackers can hack into people's minds and change what they see, hear or smell. How is all this possible? Simple: Technology.

It is the near distant future where wet-ware technology is almost fully integrated into society and many people have implants in their brains allowing them to plug into the digital world. To take it a step further, the advances in cybernetic technology and the advent of the "cyberbrain" allow people to rid themselves of human flesh and be reinstalled into cyborgs. Everyone is plugged into the neural net.

Of course with all this new technology comes new versions of cyber crimes and a new breed of hackers. The most deadly crime is called the "Ghost Hack," when someone basically takes over your body for however long they want. Your brain has been hacked!

This is where the Public Peace Section 9 comes in. Section 9 is a top-secret government agency that answers to no one and handles the most serious cyber brain crimes. The members of Section 9 each have their own particular strengths that come from the various cybernetic implants that they have. For example, Saito is a sniper with a cybernetic eye that is linked directly to an orbiting satellite, Batou is a cyborg with superhuman strength, and Major Kusanagi is the sexy team leader who is almost all cyborg excluding her brain and spine.

Combining the highest quality digital animation in the business with extremely intelligent and intricate stories Production I.G. has created a very convincing high-tech, fast-paced action series. The episodes deal with cyber crimes, black op government conspiracies, and the evolution of hacking. They also touch upon the troubling questions of what is human? What is artificial?

Just to give you an idea of the popularity of this series *Ghost in the Shell: SAC* ran for 26 episodes and has just been picked up for a second season. Can't wait for the second season? Don't worry Production IG is working on another *Ghost in the Shell* movie titled *Innocence* due to come out in theaters sometime in 2004. This is an extremely intelligent series that may one day be called prophetic. – *Daniel Kang*

Think clowns are scary? Won't go to the circus? How about the carnival? Not even for the cotton candy?

Then Mezco Toyz is playing with your phobias and having a great time with their new Dark Carnival figures. Meet the twisted mass that is the Browning Brothers; listen to Madame Mortuus reveal your dark fate; and peek behind the curtain at the clowns! Cadaver and Stitches (above) entertain in their own morbid way. So, you might want to rethink what kind of clowns you find scary. Your fears don't even begin to cover these guys!

Ghost in the Shell © &™ 2004 Production I.G. ; Dark Carnival © & ™ Mezco Toyz

SPLINTER EFFECT

BY JIM CATAPANO

WITH YOUTHFUL EXUBERANCE AND A BIT OF RIGHTEOUS ANGER, CREATOR BRIAN WOOD TAKES ON THE SYSTEM AND SLOWLY BREAKS IT DOWN.

Brian Wood, the writer behind *Channel Zero* and Marvel's *Generation X* series, has been prolific of late with two books widely divergent in theme, style and tone. One, *Dirtbike Manifesto*, continues the story introduced in last year's *Couriers*; the other is new in every sense of the word.

The latter, *Demo*, by Wood and artist Becky Cloonan, is an original and poignant series on the consequences of being born with super powers. Perhaps paradoxically given its subject matter, *Demo* compiles a very realistic set of stories. The characters, young people in their teens and 20s, are virtually alone in the world, and there is little adulation to balance out the angst. They are condemned and rejected for being who they are, a universal problem that many can relate to, particularly teens and young adults. *Demo* is a far more realistic take than the traditional superhero story, but it also mirrors the real-life crises of young people who are looked upon as different or flawed.

"*Demo* is a little different in that the 'super-

power' aspect to it is *very* subtle," says Wood. "I stay *away* completely from things like costumes and code names."

However, Wood is reluctant to lump *Demo* into any perceived "realism" movement.

"In the end, I would hope *Demo* is remembered for the stories themselves, rather than being part of a 'sub-movement' in superhero comics."

Though the characters in *Demo* are in their teens and early 20s, Wood doesn't want to be seen as writing only for this age group. In truth, the issues explored in *Demo* are not necessarily unique to that demographic, the themes of isolation, self-doubt and feeling "wrong" being universal.

"Everyone remembers what it was like being young," says Wood. "The trials of growing into your own identity and finding a place in society. And it can even continue on into adulthood. I think these stories can resonate with anyone.

"The characters in *Demo* run the range from mid-teens to late twenties. I'm 31 myself, and didn't want to come off as out of touch or even creepy by just writing kids, and I have a lot to say about when I was in my 20's."

Wood admits that the stories hit home for him as well. "It's probably no secret that I am pulling a lot from my own experiences with *Demo*," he says. "At least in part. And each story means something different to me."

The first three issues are self-contained stories —"NYC," "Emmy," and "Bad Blood." Each tell the tale of a young girl whose unusual abilities cause a terrible amount of pain, confusion and isolation. As such, the series is likely to resonate with women, perhaps even those that do not read comics with any regularity. However, Wood explains that the focus on solely female characters thus far was not deliberate.

"The first three being mainly female characters is sort of a coincidence," he says promising that it's a trend that will not continue. "Issue 4 is pretty much the 'All Men Being Brawny' issue."

EVERYONE DOES THIS AT SOME POINT - TAKE A LOOK AT SOMEONE AND JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS. YOU PROBABLY DID IT THIS MORNING.

That said, Wood sees little difficulty in writing for the female voice and perspective.

"I don't actively try to do anything that different when I write females. I think people react pretty universally most of the time to most things, and I just try to treat them not as men or women, but as humans. So far, no complaints.

"But I still think that works, and I hope *Demo* does appeal to young women. Too many times in comics being a female means either being weak, clingy, or making jokes about clothes and shopping. I hope the lack of that sort of stereotyping comes through in *Demo*."

One of the most resonant of the early issues is "Emmy," a tragic tale of a girl with an unfortunate power that gives new meaning to the term "verbal abuse." It is a story that Wood is particularly proud of, as is artist Cloonan.

"If I had to say, I think Emmy's story is pretty powerful, in large part due to [Cloonan's] wonderfully expressive artwork."

"Bad Blood" sees Samantha Hurley reuniting with her estranged family for a funeral, and eventually discovering something unexpected in her genes. Despite the setting, it is perhaps the most upbeat of the early installments.

"'Bad Blood' is all about family ties, death, abandonment, suicide, and learning to accept your kin as they are," says Wood. "It has a fun twist at the end, but that issue comes directly from my own experiences."

The first issue, "NYC" tells the story of Marie, a girl with uncontrollable telekinesis who escapes to the big city with her boyfriend.

"'NYC' is more general, about independence, being young and free and true to yourself. The bit about being medicated comes from friends and ex-girlfriends who struggle with the meds vs. personality, as I witnessed it firsthand."

A future *Demo* installment, tentatively titled "Girl You Want," features a main character who literally changes according to people's perceptions and expectations.

"This is a strange issue," admits Wood. "I am actually in the middle of rewriting it now. I'm trying to ride a fine line, keeping the tone of this light and fun, but dealing with false perceptions and stalking at a true level.

"Everyone does this at some point - take a look at someone and jump to conclusions. You probably did it this morning. And even when it happens to us, when someone does that to us, we never learn from it. It's human nature. No matter who you are."

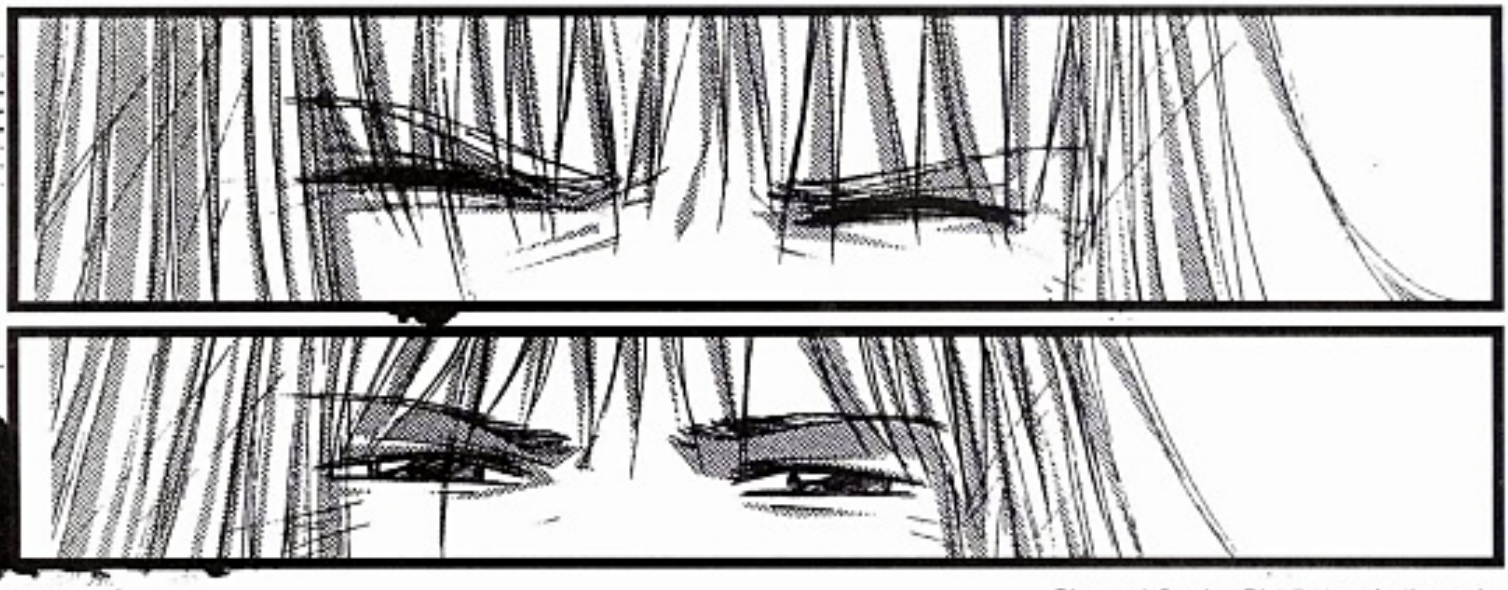
Unlike the traditional super-powered beings who are forever forming leagues and forces, these characters are unlikely to find camaraderie and solace. According to Wood, like most teens, these young anti-heroes are going to have to face their demons on their own.

"The plan right now is to keep them fully self-contained, like little mini-graphic novels," says Wood. "If a good 'crossover' idea occurs to me, though, I would absolutely do it."

Demo reunites Wood with Becky Cloonan, with whom he collaborated on *Channel Zero: Jennie One*.

"Becky Cloonan's art on *Demo* I feel is ground-breaking and alarmingly good considering the short amount of time she's been in comics. Her own stories, books she is writing and drawing, will be the ones to watch out for

DEMO/CO-DEMO ©2004 BECKY CLOONAN AND BRIAN WOOD. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. VERTIGO AND THE VERTIGO LOGO ARE TRADEMARKS OF DC COMICS INC.



next year."

Though he still has a hand in the visual depiction of his world, Wood has great faith in his co-conspirator.

"I put full trust in Becky, and give her lots of responsibility, in terms of layout and pacing. So far we have had no differences. There are times when the art comes back a little different than I imagined it in my head, but 99.9% of the time it's better. It's cool, Becky is co-creator and I give her as much freedom and say in the visuals as she wants."

Wood, an artist and designer who has worked for Rockstar Games and created a variety of book covers, heaps huge praise on his collaborator. "Becky is a far better artist than I, so that helps.... I give her as much visual input as I possibly can, and I love to see how that shapes the final product."

Working on *Demo* has been a completely different experience for Wood from other works like *Channel Zero*, which he is happy to leave well in the past.

"*Channel Zero* represents a whole other time for me," says Wood. "I had *zero* knowledge of the comics industry, how readers are, anything like that. I was just an art student working on a project. So now, seven years, six graphic novels and a few dozen comics later, I am a lot more educated to the whole process and the scene, and in a way, *Demo* is a combo of all that experience. Walking the superhero/indie line and keeping true to my style isn't as easy as it may seem."

Wood is pleased with the story so far and the direction that it's headed in.

"Future issues...they just keep getting better and better," he notes. "Issue 4 is just about as rock solid as can be, and beyond that Becky and I are loosening up a bit, doing some more humorous storylines, stuff that's definitely 'out there' compared to the first few."

Coming on the heels of *Demo* is *Dirtbike Manifesto*, the sequel to *Couriers*, which is again illustrated by Rob G (*Teenagers from Mars*) and features the "mercenary" bike messengers Moustafa and Special. Wood considers the *Courier* books to be among the most challenging to realize.

"Oddly, *The Couriers* is always really hard for me to write," he admits. "When I get rollin' it's lots of fun, and Rob G is always encouraging me to challenge him visually. But it's harder than it sounds, a whole graphic novel of killing and smart-ass dialogue."

This time, Moustafa and Special are leaving their New York City environment and heading upstate, setting up new challenges in the classic "fish out of water" scenario.

"Setting *Dirtbike* in the rurals of Upstate New York was fun, though, and gave me lots of stuff to work with that doesn't exist in cities. It's scaled down, action-wise, no helicopters or rogue Red Army elements, but plenty of pickup trucks and high powered deer rifles. Good times, good times."

Though some might see *Demo* as indicative of the recent new style of hero as seen in *The Ultimates* and *X-Statix*, Wood would rather that the series stand on its own merit.

"I really don't know what sort of long term impact [those books] are going to have," says Wood.

Wood is forthright when it comes to confronting the state of the industry today, and his place in it.

"I know I will never be a big name in comics, and the sorts of comics I do will never be huge in the industry," he says. "But I am growing fast in the bookstore market, and truth be told, that excites me more than trying to crack Diamond's Top 100."

Diamond Comics Distributors is the main distribution outlet for comics in the specialty market.

Why do things take so long to change and grow in a medium widely considered to be largely without limits?

"Are comics celebrated for being largely without limits? They may be, but who really would know that based on what we see on comic shop shelves? The truly innovative people never get exposure, or if they do, it's outside of the direct market."

Wood does not see an industry-wide revolution coming anytime soon.

"I think that the comics industry is what it is, and that's that," he says. "We are just learning that we should not limit ourselves to just that one audience. I'm sure not."

That said, Wood identifies a number of books available now that appeal to his vision of perfection in the medium.

"I read most of what Top Shelf publishes, and stay loyal to series like *100 Bullets* and *The Losers*. I would almost call those perfect comics, the right amount of art and craft and entertainment."

Demo is slated for a 12-issue run, but as before, Wood sees himself moving on to other characters and themes.

"I seriously doubt there will be more *Demo* after these. This series is intended to be my last hurrah at the whole Teen/Young Person With Powers sub-genre than I explored a little when I was writing for Marvel. Using up a few story ideas, getting it all out of my system."

The first issue of *Demo* bowed in November; *Dirtbike Manifesto* is slated for January '04. Both series are published by AiT/PlanetLar. (V)

THE VAULT

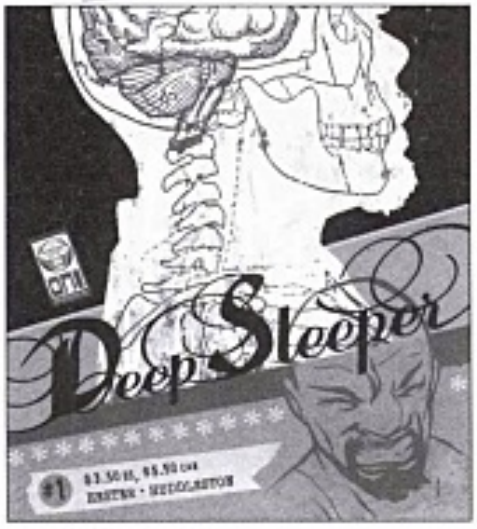
A LOOK AT WHAT'S WHAT IN COMICS, NOVELS & MOVIES

FALLEN ANGEL

Writer: Peter David
Artist: David Lopez & Fernando Blanco
DC Comics (www.dccomics.com)

Writer Peter David has done so much great work that it's almost impossible to list it all. He's written scripts for *Babylon 5*, been on the NY Times Bestseller list with *Star Trek* novels, and is also a veteran comic book writer. If you're familiar with his work on *Supergirl* it's no surprise to find that he's got a thing for angels, but there's no need to be familiar with that world to be absorbed into this one.

Set in the city of Bete-Noire, New Orleans, *Fallen Angel* is no Trek. It has a noir feel, nice and dark. The series introduces some interesting characters that have very complicated relationships with each other. Dolf is an elderly German who alludes to his former political debacles and runs a bar called Furor's where our main character, Lee, conducts most of her business which, for the most part, is about helping people. Dr. Juris is the mastermind of Bete-Noire's underworld and may be in love with Lee but still tries to kill her for interfering in his work. David lures the reader into this world. The dialogue is witty and flows smoothly, maybe too smoothly at times but that's not a bad thing. Every issue is packed thick with mystery and action that keeps you wanting more, more information, more story. And David dangles that story in front of the reader like a carrot on a string. - DK



DEEP SLEEPER

Writer: Phil Hester
Artist: Mike Huddleston
Oni Press (www.onipress.com)

If the first issue of *Deep Sleeper* is any indication, Phil Hester and Mike Huddleston have hit another one out of the park. The team had previously collaborated on the brilliant science-fiction horror miniseries, *The Coffin*, which managed to draw on the likes of Shelley and Lovecraft without coming off as derivative. Now, with *Sleeper*, the duo tackles the story of Cole Gibson, a troubled writer whose fate entangles him with an ancient order of monks with mysterious abilities and dark allegiances. Hester's story powerfully recalls themes explored in *The Matrix* and *Sandman* and his dialogue neatly dodges any hokeyness, while Huddleston's art remains as evocative and effective at drawing both the natural and supernatural as ever. The first issue dangles tantalizing hints of a multitude of directions that the series could follow, each one as intriguing as the last, guaranteeing that this will be one hell of a ride. - PK

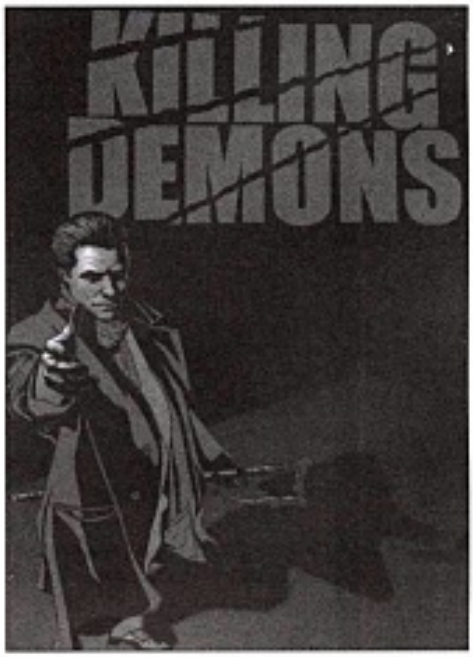
KILLING DEMONS

Writer: Peter Siegel
Artist: Brent White
Engine Press (www.Enginepress.com)

Peter Siegel is a connoisseur of fine slasher/horror films and it shows in *Killing Demons*, his tribute to the genre. This is one fine horror graphic novel. Brent White's dark and graphic artwork brings a very realistic feel that is seldom done right in other horror comics though his inexperience in comics can still be seen in the main body of the story. His emerging style is more clearly defined in the prologue and epilogue. The darkness of the some of the grays, which could simply be a result of the printing, add to the horrific atmosphere but take away from the clarity as you can't quite make out everything that needs to be seen at certain points in the story. A handheld demon lord blends into the main character's glove rendering him almost indecipherable from the folds in the leather.

The world of Joshua Brand, whom the demons call the Butcher Son, is a deeply twisted one. After witnessing the massacre of his family by demons, he is trained to see them and hunt them. As *Killing Demons* unfolds, the demons are killing women who are intrinsically good in order to weaken the barrier between the human world and the demon world so they can come and infest. The story is a bloody murder mystery, with aid from a detective who becomes sexier as they story needs her to be, and develops a relationship quickly between these two forces of good.

The story remains wide-open for more of Brand's world to be explored. And since he has



the power to do, he should continue to kill demons. Siegel and White offer a bold new addition to comics and they should return to the table. - DK

LORE

Writer: T.P. Louise and Ashley Wood
Art: Wood
IDW Publishing (www.idwpublishing.com)

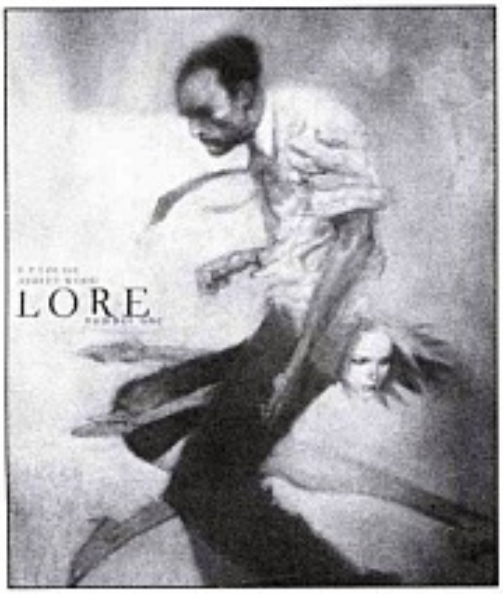
The chaotic nature of Ashley Wood's art is duplicated in his writing. There's a feel of slap-dash-put-together with in *Lore*: it's not that apparent what he's trying to do.

There are bits and pieces of folklore that

FALLEN ANGEL © © 2003 SECOND AGE, INC. AND DAVID LOPEZ. ™ DC COMICS. DEEP SLEEPER © 2003 HESTER & HUDDLESTON. KILLING DEMONS © SIEGEL & WHITE.

pop up, and that where the stories find their anchor, but no link seems to exist yet. Wood's art is amazingly done, pencils and colors and paints and collage tell different part of different tales without telling anything.

A probate lawyer, a Vatican counsel, a possessed young girl might have nothing in com-



mon but eventually their stories come together in this project. They don't come together easily and it takes more than half the book for it to make much sense, and even when it does, you're still not sure where it's going.

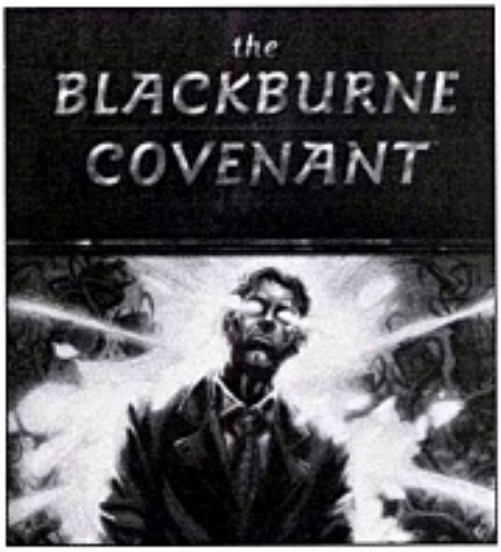
What it looks like after this uneven opening is that characters of folklore and paranormal activity are coming forward and becoming commonplace. The Vatican is worried because people are stopping their church-going ways due to the proliferation of myth. It does take more than one reading to get what Wood's saying. Following issues should flesh it out, one hopes, as the story being pieced together has great potential. - MM

THE BLACKBURNE COVENANT

Writer: Fabian Nicieza
Artist: Stefano Raffaele
Dark Horse Comics (www.darkhorse.com)

There is something about Fabian Nicieza's writing in his new collection *The Blackburne Covenant* that's familiar. It reads like the person at the coffee shop you know you know, but can't place the who's or where's. This supernatural horror conspiracy tale is like nothing he's written before. In fact it's better than any of this best-selling writers other works.

Fantasy novelist Richard Kane has rode his first novel, *The Blackburne Covenant*, all the way to the top of *New York Times* best-seller list. Now he has fame, money and plenty of wine and women, but he can't shake the feeling that everything is not what it seems. It's more than the fans and the paparazzi, strange people have been shadowing him and then there are the flashes of impossible memories of vines overrunning Manhattan. It seems that Richard's novel is not as fictional as he believed and the Covenant will go to any length to keep their



ancient secrets from completely changing life on earth.

Italian horror artist Stefano Raffaele's realistic rendering and oily blacks compliment Nicienza's words perfectly adding to the uneasy familiarity that is key to *The Blackburne Covenant*'s horror. Raffaele also masterfully constructs the panels pushing most of the violence and adult themes into the shadow leaving more to the imagination of the reader heightening the suspense.

If you enjoy horror titles with a touch of fantasy and a lot of conspiracy along the lines of Vertigo's *Hellblazer* than this is the book for you. -JB

CHIAROSCURO

Writer/Artist: Troy Little
www.meanwhilestudios.com

Steven Patch's life is going nowhere. He's an artist, but he's going to do it his way, not the way those "pretentious assholes" do it. So he sits at home looking at a blank canvas he's barely touched and feeling sorry for himself. "There is nothing so truly terrifying as unlimited potential," he says as he passes out into another lonely night. Yet not everything is doom and gloom.

Chiaroscuro creator Troy Little surrounds Patch with a lively cast who form a safety net that he's happy to fall into again and again. At times, these moments seem to consume an entire issue bogging down the forward motion of the series itself. When the story does progress, we see Little deftly mixing the darker and lighter elements of Patch's life, inspired by the basic meaning of the art technique "chiaroscuro," to paint a portrait of a man that's both funny and tragic all at once. Whether getting coffee at his friend Anthony's shop or dealing with thugs who mistake him for someone else and beat him senseless, Patch's life is shown by Little with an unflinching objective eye. His art style complements his storytelling, as

well. Light, fluid lines against large tracts of inky black lend an almost Film Noir feel to the series, bringing Patch's joy and pain to stark life. - BA

DEAD @ 17

Story/Art: Josh Howard
www.vipercomics.com

Your average 17-year-old girl's got a lot to worry about: boys, grades, parents. The lead of the new series *Dead @ 17* can add to that list zombies and rising from the dead. Nara Kilday's one of a powerful group of chosen ones, beings "not subject to the laws of death." Evil men and their zombie servants are seeking her and others like her, known as the "Resurrected." Killed

only so she might be born again, Nara, joined by her best friend Hazy Foss, is quickly submerged into a dark conspiracy by the forces of evil to use her powers to conquer the world.

Much of that may seem like cliché – unlikely

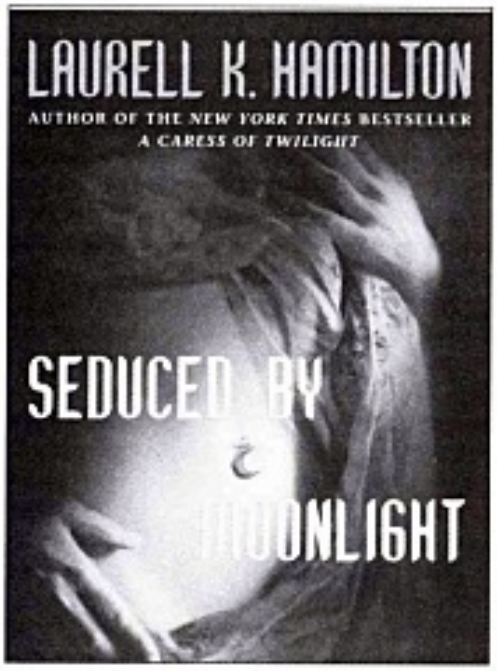
LORE IS © & ™ 2004 ASHLEY WOOD & IDW LLC. BLACKBURNE COVENANT © 2004 NICIEZA & RAFFAELE. CHIAROSCURO © 2004 TROY LITTLE. DEAD @ 17™ & © JOSH HOWARD. SERVICED BY MOONDUST © 2004 JAUBERT K. HAMILTON. JACKET PHOTO: JUDY YORK/DESIGN SAINT STEVENSON. THE SIAB © 2004 JEFF MARCOTTE. ELLEN RAMBALIER ™ LION'S GAB FILMS.

hero as last hope for mankind – or derivative – young girl fights monsters ala *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. In reality, series writer and artist Josh Howard manages to keep the story fresher and more interesting than it has any right to be, with fast pacing and natural sounding dialogue. In a rarity for the comics industry, Nara and Hazy's banter sounds like it could be genuine instead of being an adult's idea of what teenage girls actually talk like. Howard's art at times detracts from the story's smooth flow, employing a limited set of facial expressions and body poses that stiffens the action. Yet, in an industry thirsting for new voices, Howard's is one eagerly welcomed. – BA

SEDUCED BY MOONLIGHT

Writer: Laurell K. Hamilton
Random House (www.randomhouse.com)

Seduced by Moonlight, the third installment in the Meredith Gentry series by Laurell K. Hamilton, is certain to please fans of the earlier books, *A Kiss of Shadows* and *A Caress of Twilight*. Readers familiar only Hamilton's Anita



Blake: Vampire Hunter series should be forewarned that Meredith is a very different animal. In fact, she's a detective who is really a Faerie princess (or perhaps the other way round.) The world she inhabits is not Anita's dark world of vampires and lycanthropes, but a place where the underlying sensuality of the Blake novels is brought to the fore.

Meredith (or "Merry") is small with dark hair and very pale skin, exactly like Anita, but the similarities end at the surface. Hamilton approaches her latest heroine and the world of Faerie and Sidhe as if she were a completely different writer from the one that crafted Blake's universe. The ongoing plot of the series concerns the machinations of Queen Andais of the Unseelie court, who has made Merry, her niece, compete with her son for the throne. In order to claim said throne, Merry must sleep with as many courtesans as possible in an attempt to become pregnant.

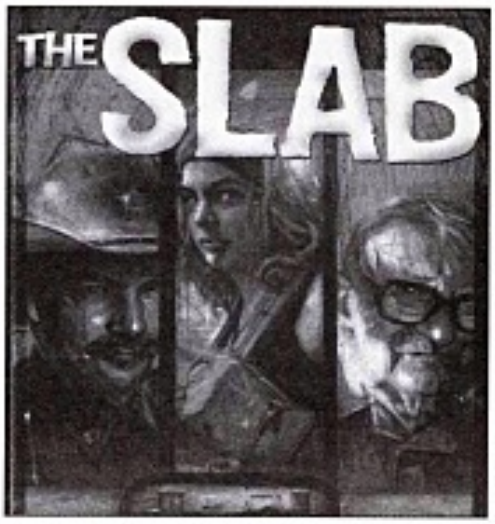
It is a testament to Hamilton's formidable abilities that such an unseemly premise can be made passable. That said, the graphic sex does seem to be the point of this series. Thus, one would be hard-pressed to find a single page where the words "naked" or "sex" do not appear. The book is saved from being just a piece of literary porn with fantasy elements by Hamilton's distinctive, poetic writing and the originality of her exotic characters whom Merry bounces off of, each bringing out different aspects of her personality.

For readers new to Hamilton's work, it is recommended not to start with *Seduced by Moonlight*, but with *A Kiss of Shadows*—or better still, with *Cruel Intentions*, the first in the Anita Blake series. Arriving at the beginning and taking the journey to *Seduced by Moonlight* should give needed context and provide for a more satisfying experience of Hamilton's considerable talents. – JC

THE SLAB

Writer: Jeff Mariotte
Illustrations by Tommy Lee Edwards
IDW Publishing (www.idwpublishing.com)

The Slab, as a title, doesn't do this book justice. The Slab itself is an important part of the story, but the story is much larger than the con-



crete area it stands for. The criss-crossing stories and characters converge in an apocalyptic conclusion, but it's that road they take that is so much more interesting than the fantastical ending.

A story about people facing personal crossroads tends to move the readers to find a bit of themselves in a character. In *The Slab*, Mariotte gives the reader a bus load of characters, none of whom you can confuse with the others, all of whom have their own tales, and all of whom you can look at and either like (as you're expected to) or despise (as you'll see).

Mariotte gives three characters a moment in their pasts that bring them together, one moment during war that all three look upon as the moment when things changed. It's that magic that slowing seeps into the book as the reader watches the stories and the people converge to do that which all hope to be able to do if the time ever comes: stand up and combat the greatest evil.

And what's funny is that as you watch the evil rise to the surface, and you see characters become affected by it, you see that man isn't that far off from the evil he purports to hate. – MM

DIARY OF ELLEN RIMBAUER

Lion's Gate Films/October Films
www.lionsgatefilms.com

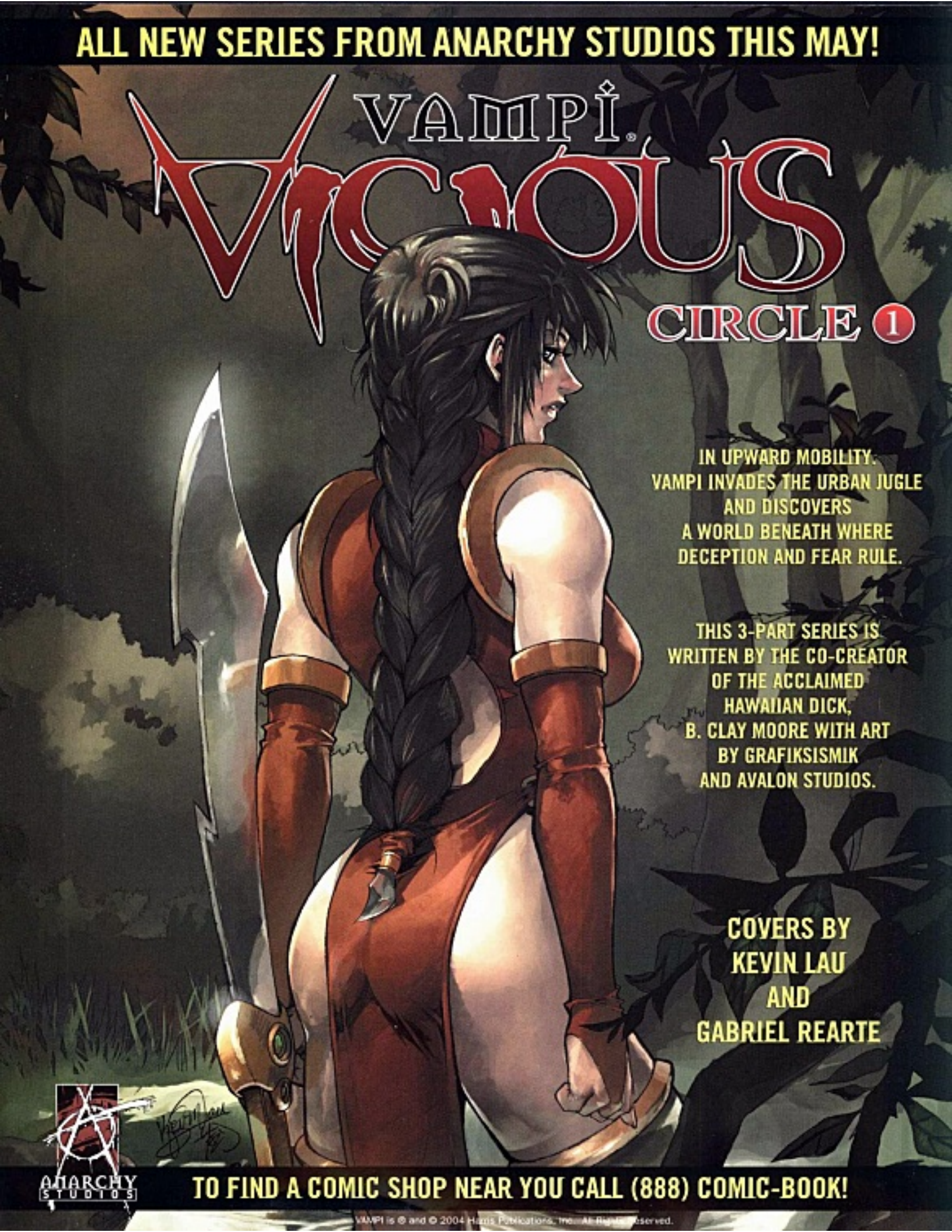
There's something about a TV movie, based on historical fiction, based on a movie based on a book by a famous author. It's not all good, but there's something about it.

Diary of Ellen Rimbauer was a made-for-TV-movie that was based on the book of the same name, a book that was purported to have been based on real incidents. Well, the real incidents were concocted for Stephen King's *Rose Red*, the story of a truly haunted house, which itself

was made into a TV miniseries.

The DVD of *Ellen Rimbauer* doesn't offer much in the way of extras. The commentary track is by writer Ridley Pearson, who also wrote the novel under a pseudonym. He provides some insights as an outsider looking into film production, but also makes comments like "I hope that came out in the script" to things that didn't necessarily come out in the filming.

King's creations have an allure to them, there's that undercurrent of reality to his horror that makes it more horrific and that's what he and Pearson were going for with their Diary creation. This translation from book to screen loses a lot of the fear that King relies on, and in that Ellen Rimbauer loses her audience. - MM


ALL NEW SERIES FROM ANARCHY STUDIOS THIS MAY!
VAMPI
VICIOUS
CIRCLE 1
IN UPWARD MOBILITY.
VAMPI INVADES THE URBAN JUGLE
AND DISCOVERS
A WORLD BENEATH WHERE
DECEPTION AND FEAR RULE.
THIS 3-PART SERIES IS
WRITTEN BY THE CO-CREATOR
OF THE ACCLAIMED
HAWAIIAN DICK,
B. CLAY MOORE WITH ART
BY GRAFIKSISMIK
AND AVALON STUDIOS.
COVERS BY
KEVIN LAU
AND
GABRIEL REARTE
ANARCHY STUDIOS
TO FIND A COMIC SHOP NEAR YOU CALL (888) COMIC-BOOK!
VAMPI is ® and © 2004 Harris Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

I SEE A TRIPLE HOMICIDE STARRING A DEAD GRANNY AND TWO DEAD VIGILANTES.
NOT THAT ANYONE IS GOING TO MISS THE RETALIATOR. I ONCE SAW HIM SMASH A GUY'S FACE INTO A CURB, KNOCKED OUT ALL IS TEETH...
...BLOOD EVERYWHERE. THAT TYPE OF THING IS JUST BAD PR. THINK ABOUT IT, HOW WAS HE EVER GOING TO GET COMMERCIAL ENDORSEMENTS?
WHAT IS IT WITH YOU COSTUMES? YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME... THE CITY IS IN DANGER!!
VAMPIRELLA MUST DIE
part the third of the definitive infinity virus
THIS IS NEW YORK BABY; THIS CITY IS ALWAYS IN DANGER.
THAT'S WHY STAINLESS STEELE IS ON THE JOB. NOW LETS MAKE WITH THE SURRENDER, BEFORE I...
OH, COME ON! DON'T DO THAT!

LISTEN TO ME YOU MORON!
DYNAMIC FORCE HAS BEEN INFECTED WITH A SPACE VIRUS. IF WE DON'T GET THEM THE ANTIDOTE SOON, THEY'LL GO CRAZY AND KILL EVERYONE AROUND THEM!
THAT MEANS CIVILIANS-- UNDERSTAND?
HEY! MY SECRET IDENTITY!
AS MUCH AS I ENJOY A GOOD LAP DANCE...
I FIND THIS REALLY INAPPROPRIATE.
DAMN! WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DRINKING, PAINT THINNER?
WHAT ARE YOU MY SPONSOR? AT LEAST I'M NOT KILLING OLD LADIES!
UGH! NASTY... SMELLS LIKE BLOODY MARY FROM AN AIRLINE PUSHCART.
YOU HAVE TO HELP US GET TO THE DYNAMIC FORCE TOWER!
THE ONLY PLACE THAT I'M GOING TO HELP YOU GET TO IS A JAIL CELL, YOU VAMPED UP CRAZY BITCH!
YOU HAD TO SAY THE "B" WORD DIDN'T YOU?

UMMM, THAT'S GREAT V, BUT HOW ARE YOU GONNA GET DOWN FROM THERE?
CRAP.
YOU JUST GET DOWN TO THE STREET, TINA. I'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT.
HEY BABY, WE MEET AGAIN! THIS MUST BE FATE...
WHAM-O
THAT WAS EASY.
LET'S GO.
MOTHERFUCKER'S!
IT JUST BE RAINING WHITE PEOPLE TODAY.

PROFESSOR RX - -
--WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS CONTRAPTION?
COME ON ALREADY PROF, I COULD HAVE WALKED OVER THERE BY NOW WITH TWO BUSTED LEGS.
WELL, TO PUT IT SIMPLY, MY COLOSSAL COMPANION...THIS IS A TELEPORTATION PAD.
I SHALL EXHIBIT ITS POWER BY TRANSPORTING POLECAT FROM THIS SIDE OF THE ROOM TO THAT SIDE OF THE ROOM.
GROW SOME PATIENCE WILL YOU?
IT TAKES TIME TO MAKE THE PROPER CALCULATIONS TO INSURE YOU DON'T BECOME A THROW RUG IN THE DEN, MY FURRY FRIEND.
WOW! IT WORKS!
OF COURSE IT WORKS, YOU KNUCKLE DRAGGING ASS. I'M A GENIUS.
ARE YOU YELLING AT ME?
I'M SORRY BIG GUY, REALLY, I'M NOT FEELING WELL.
I'M NOT FEELING ALL THAT SPORTY EITHER, BUT YOU DON'T SEE ME BEING A CRANKY LITTLE BITCH ABOUT IT.
TRUE, BUT THEN AGAIN, IF YOUR BRAIN SIZE CORRESPONDED WITH THE DIMENSIONS OF THAT COLOSSAL CONTAINMENT VESSEL YOU CALL A BODY, I WOULDN'T HAVE TO CLARIFY EVERY LITTLE THING I DO. WHAT A HOLIDAY THAT WOULD BE!
YOU TWO ARE A COUPLE OF OLD LADIES.
I PUKED THREE TIMES THIS MORNING. GREEN STUFF, KINDA CHUNKY. YOU HEAR ME COMPLAINING?
GROW SOME BALLS ALREADY.

UM, POLECAT, YOU HAVE A... YOU KNOW... A--
DID I GIVE YOU YOUR ANNUAL RABIES VACCINATION?
MY WHAT? JESUS CHRIST WHAT IS YOUR PROBLEM, BUD?
I SEEM TO REMEMBER GIVING YOU YOUR PARVO AND HEARTWORM SHOTS...
YOU GUYS ARE ALWAYS LOOKING DOWN AT ME BECAUSE I HAVE MUTATED SKUNK DNA!
THAT IS UNTIL YOU NEED TO GAS A FEW HUNDRED ALIEN INVADERS THEN IT'S, "OOH, POLECAT PLEASE COME TO OUR RESCUE. SAVE US!"
THEN THE MINUTE I AM DONE, YOU GET ALL STAR TREK ON MY ASS. "LOOK AT ALL THE DEATH YOU HAVE CAUSED, THESE CREATURES ARE INTELLIGENT BEINGS"... AND SO ON!
I'M ALWAYS PULLING YOUR BUTTS OUT OF THE FIRE. HELL, YOU NEVER SEE ME GET CAPTURED!
NO ONE WANTS TO CAPTURE YOU... THEY CAN'T TAKE THE GAMY SMELL.
OH, NOW YOU'RE PISSING ME OFF!
YOU REMEMBER THAT ALIEN BROTHEL WE HIT ON THE PLANET GAGEXANLAMLAN RIGHT AFTER WE BEAT DOWN KIRBEX THE TERRIBLE?
I REMEMBER. WHAT ABOUT IT?
WELL SOME OF HE LADIES TOLD ME THE ONLY THING ON YOU THAT DOESN'T GET BIGGER IS YOUR...

?!AAAAAAAGGHHH!
I'M GONNA KILL YOU! SMELLY LITTLE SKUNK BASTARD!
OH NO! LOOKS LIKE I PISSED OFF THE ANGRY INCH!
BRING IT ON STUMPY!
ENOUGH!
SOMETHING IS OBVIOUSLY WRONG WITH ALL OF US.
WE MAY ARGUE, BUT NEVER LIKE THIS.
WEATHER VIXEN IS RIGHT; WE'RE ALL EXPERIENCING SOME KIND OF AILMENT.
I'LL NEED TO RUN SOME TESTS.
WE TRAVEL TO ALIEN WORLDS; OTHER DIMENSIONS AND WE NEVER ONCE GIVE THOUGHT TO THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTAMINATION.

"This is Jessica Jameson live outside the Baxter Heights apartment building where some shocking events have just taken place."
WHA--?
"These scandalous images of some of the cities most popular superheroes might be unsuitable for children...
"... but we have to show them anyway because it's sweeps week.
"Details are still coming in, but the Dung Beetle, Stainless Steele and local vigilante the Retaliator are dead."
"A bystander snapped this digital photograph of the alleged killer.
"Apparently this scantily clad bloodthirsty murderer goes by the name of Vampirella. Her assistant in deviance is yet to be identified.
"Police are asking anyone who has seen these women to come forward."
ARE YOU THINKING WHAT I'M THINKING?
THAT CRAZY CHICK IS HELLA HOT?
NO YOU MORON! VAMPIRELLA MUST DIE!

RRRAGGHHH
I'M NOT A MORON!
I'M SICK OF YOU INSULTING MY INTELLIGENCE!
WHAT INTELLIGENCE?
YOUR BOOTS HAVE VELCRO BECAUSE YOU STILL HAVEN'T LEARNED TO TIE LACES!
THAT'S IT!
ONE MORE BLOCK AND WE'RE THERE.
GOOD THING, TOO, BECAUSE I'M GUESSING WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME TO GET THIS ANTIDOTE TO DYNAMIC FORCE BEFORE THE VIRUS TURNS THEM ALL RABID.

DO YOU NOTICE THAT EVERYONE IS LOOKING AT US?
IS MY G HANGING OUT? THIS SKIRT IS SPRAYED ON.
WHAT ARE WE WALKING INTO? EXACTLY HOW TOUGH IS DYNAMIC FORCE?
I DUNNO. THEY'RE SUPERHEROES SO I GUESS THEY'RE BADASS.
WELL IF IT COMES DOWN TO AGGRESSIVE NEGOTIATIONS I WANT YOU TO GET THE HELL OUT OF THERE.
I EXPECT THINGS TO GET BLOODY AND, FROM WHAT YOU TOLD ME ABOUT THIS POLECAT, SMELLY AS WELL.
DON'T WORRY V, I SNIFF AN AIR BISCUIT AND I'M RUNNING FOR WESTCHESTER.
KAA-
BOOM

OOOPS... I'M GUESSING WE'RE TOO LATE.
OR OUR JOB IS DONE. TINA, LET ME APOLOGIZE IN ADVANCE...
BUT I THINK WE'RE LOOKING AT A MULTI-LAYERED WORLD OF TROUBLE.
OKAY, I'M READY TO GO BACK TO MY BORING LIFE AGAIN.
Written By
Jimmy Palmiotti
& Justin Gray
Pencilled By
Gabriel Rearte
Inked By Meth
Colored By
Raymond Lee
Letters By Michael Conley
BLONDIE AT THE CBGB'S
NYPD
(Special Thanks To Nick Barrucci)
TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

By Maureen McTigue

DEMON CRAWL

THE NATURE OF CYBER-PUNK HORROR IS JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG FOR AUTHOR JOHN SHIRLEY

Don't try to put John Shirley in a box. He has written books and music, short stories and novels, science fiction and horror, and notes, "Sometimes categorization can be a convenient marketing tool and you're stuck with it.

"I resist it more than most people," Shirley, who bedecked in black with a skull and crossbones bolo tie, exudes confidence and intelligence, says. "Bruce Sterling is an unapologetic science fiction writer and proud to be a science fiction writer, and I'm sort of an accidental science fiction writer because that was the place you could find a forum to get across a wild idea at the time and reach a lot of people. That's why I fell into science fiction. I feel that I choose a genre for the material that I want to convey for the metaphor. If what I want to say is said with they kind of symbols that you find in science fiction then I choose that, and if what I want to say is best said with the kind of symbols you find in horror then I write it as a horror novel, the same with suspense."

He does see though, that his categorization with a "cyberpunk horror" vein is fitting. When a small band of science fiction writers took their genre into another world, bringing the burgeoning computer age into the forefront, it was like a door was opened. Authors like Sterling, Philip K. Dick, William Gibson and Shirley twisted conventional science fiction to make it what they wanted it to be. And Shirley looks upon it more deeply than that. "Well, a lot of the better new art comes from fusions of two previous formats; you find that in other art, you find it in

literature. I've always synthesized things that didn't seem connected and that's partly what cyberpunk was about anyway, bringing in elements that didn't seem to belong in science fiction and fusing them in like beat poetry and French poets like Baudelaire and progressive writers like William Burroughs and Hubert Selby and rock imagery and feel, and modern filmmakers were also an influence in me and other cyberpunk writers. I think that Crawlers is theoretically a cyberpunk horror novel, it uses cybernetic imagery and ideas and the emphasis on things happening at the street level. Being, down on the streets trying to figure things out is very much a cyberpunk approach."

In *Crawlers*, Shirley takes a look at what could happen when a government experiment goes completely wrong. So wrong, in fact, that it gains a mind of its own and takes over a small California town. "This book sort of wears its subtext on its sleeve," the author says of his newest tale. "It's really about human beings finding a balance between technology as a convenience and technology as slavery. Convenience can become slavery and it happens to people all the time when they give up too much of their time to their iPods, their palm pilots, their Gameboys and their instant messaging, the cell phones and their dvd players and so on," he laughs. "You see, I could go on, that's the point really. Technology is a double-edge sword in the applied sense. The defense department's use of it to make their jobs more expedient can even save lives if you have a really smart bomb, you can kill fewer people. But it can easily get out of control if you don't plan enough.

"The business with technology is all about long term thinking, in my opinion. People invent a thing but they only half invent it. They don't finish inventing it if they don't think about the negative consequences of using it. In my book, the nanotechnology sort of develops a life of its own because it too was only half invented. It's probably not going to get as far as the nanotech pod people in my story that appear to be human but are in fact robotic but you could have what some people have posited, some kind of nano-ech goo that spreads around almost like a virus or a fungus over the world."

Early science fiction and horror stories were warnings. As much as Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury were predicting what was to come, they and their peers were calling attention to what could come with such advances. Shirley picks up that torch in *Crawlers*.

"In my story," he explains, "the kind of

DEMONS & CRAWLERS © 2004 JOHN SHIRLEY. PHOTO C/O SHIRLEY. SLIZ CHESTER CUT ART BY JOANNG © CMC INTERNATIONAL RECORDS

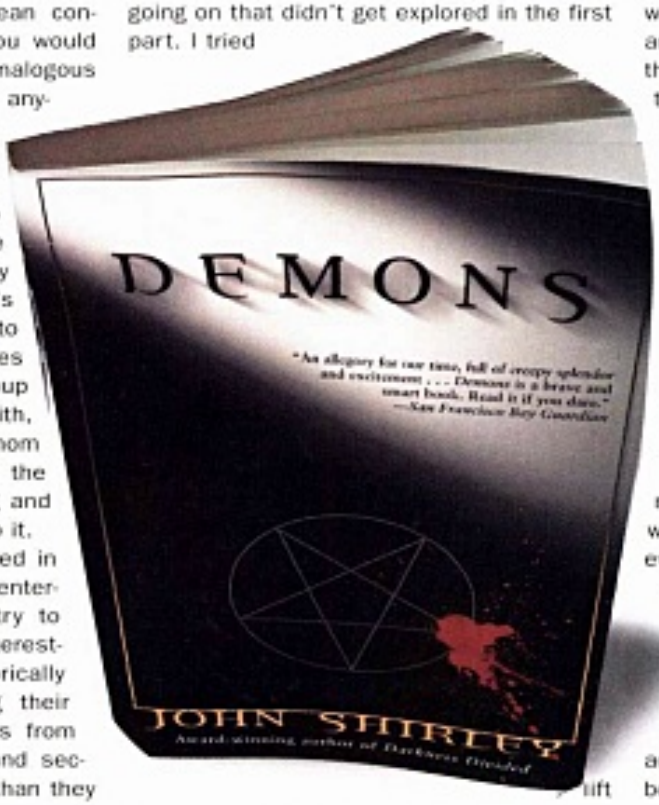
nanotech colony, the hive mind colony, experiments constantly with evolving itself and it spreads into the local animals. It has weird little variations and kind of recombining them in rather grotesque ways because I just assume to make some sort of nanotech organism efficiently they would try and make it as self-directing as possible. It was natural to me that it may try and control its own evolution, that would mean constantly experimenting and then you would get all the twisted results kind of analogous to the twisted government logic anyway."

Crawlers is creepy. The nanotech collective begins to extend its reach beyond animals into humans, and slowly take over the town as it takes over people one by one. The government knows what's going on and no one is helping to stop the spread. Our band of heroes that comes together is real; a group of people readers can identify with, with real problems, who can't fathom what they're straining under, and the audience for *Crawlers*, both young and old, will find themselves drawn into it.

"Well, I like to get them involved in the story, the story is first, it's an entertainment," Shirley says, "and I try to make it exciting and creepy and interesting. But it's obviously metaphorically about people, first of all losing their capacity to distinguish themselves from technology in their environment and secondly, people are more machines than they know; they are even without technology. We're a programmable machine-like being unless we wake-up a little bit and transcend that technology. We can be very knee-jerk and behaviorally controlled; you can see how people are conditioned by advertising, for example, to become little consumer robots, let's say. We're already partly pod people anyway," he smiles. "And it's important that this book is from the point of view of young people and this kind of reflects how they see adults. To them, adults seem very mechanistic and programmed and without the freedom that is natural to young people. And that's why in the book, the young people are less likely to be taken over by this nanotech horror and the adults are more likely to succumb because adults are half-way to zombies already."

There is a positive resolution to *Crawlers*, and that's not giving anything away since Shirley is much more interested in the path to that resolution. It's similar in *Demons* which has recently be re-released by Del Rey in an expanded edition.

"There was more to say," he says about the new Book Two, "but the publisher wanted it after all. It was originally a short book published by Cemetery Dance and it was popular and they sold them all and it got great reviews and nominations so this seemed to cry out for a fuller book; the original thing was a short novel, a novella. Also, there was a whole sense of the metaphysics going on that didn't get explored in the first part. I tried to lift the veil in the second part of the book so that you can look into the world of the so-called demonic, magical world and get a glimpse of how it might work if it's real. I actually operate on the assumption that the apparent supernatural is actually a secret physics; it's some real physical laws that we just don't understand."


DEMONS
"An allegory for our time, full of creepy splendor and excitement . . . Demons is a brave and smart book. Read it if you dare."
—San Francisco Bay Guardian
JOHN SHIRLEY
Award-winning author of Darkness Divided

Demons is about just that: demons that come to earth. It's how they got there that's disturbing, and forces you to think. He does this in *Crawlers*, too, and that's part of Shirley's plan, his message if you will, to say something to the reader.

"Well, maybe there are fewer people doing it now," he says of using science fiction and horror as a message platform. "People are concerned with pleasing the publisher more and more. Publishing was always a business but now it's extremely profit oriented so I think perhaps there's less room for subversive messages in popular fiction. You can find exceptions but it generally tends to be that way mostly because people are simply concerned with being purely entertaining. But I think it can be part of the fabric of entertainment if you're a good writer. And I'm a child of the 60s and 70s, especially the 70s, and the Vietnam War was going on and I'm not a knee-jerk leftist at all, I'm a moderate left kind of guy depending on the issue but I'm still a person who learned young that one should be skeptical of government. When we were young, we were given draft cards and told the Vietnam War was a necessary thing, two years later, the same people were telling us that the Vietnam War was a big mistake. And they were so certain before. And in *Crawlers*, you have young people realizing that adults don't know what they're doing, really, the adults put on a façade of knowing what they're doing. A lot of their energy desperately goes to creating this fake appearance of being in control but in fact something else is in control of them, social conditioning which in my book metaphorically becomes the All of Us, the kind of hive mind of the *Crawlers*."

There is desperation in the book, of never knowing what's around the corner, of watching you're parents die, of watching everything you've ever known fall apart around you.

"Usually in my stories, things are pretty bleak but there is a flash of hope and some resolution at the end without expunging the evil completely. There's still some sense of accomplishment but still sacrifices have to be made for that to happen. It's just the real world: we take two steps forward and then we probably have to take one step back, sometimes three steps back, and then start over again."

"WHEN YOU THINK ONLY IN THE SHORT TERM YOU DON'T THINK ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES PEOPLE SUFFER HORRIBLY."

In *Demons*, the second part, the mind behind the evil in the first part wants to try it again. And we're looking at the CEO of a major corporation pulling the strings of demon wrangling. "I don't think that corporations are evil," Shirley explains. "I worked for one in writing this book. I don't think that governments are evil. I think that there are evil governments and unintelligent and foolish governments and there are unintelligent, foolish, short-term thinking corporations, it's about the leadership in both places and it's about thinking past short-term goals, too. When you think only in the short term you don't think about the consequences people suffer horribly."

Shirley keeps busy with media, sometimes in novel form, other times in a more novel format. "I write songs, and have been in a lot of rock bands; I was in one or two of the first punk bands in the pacific northwest

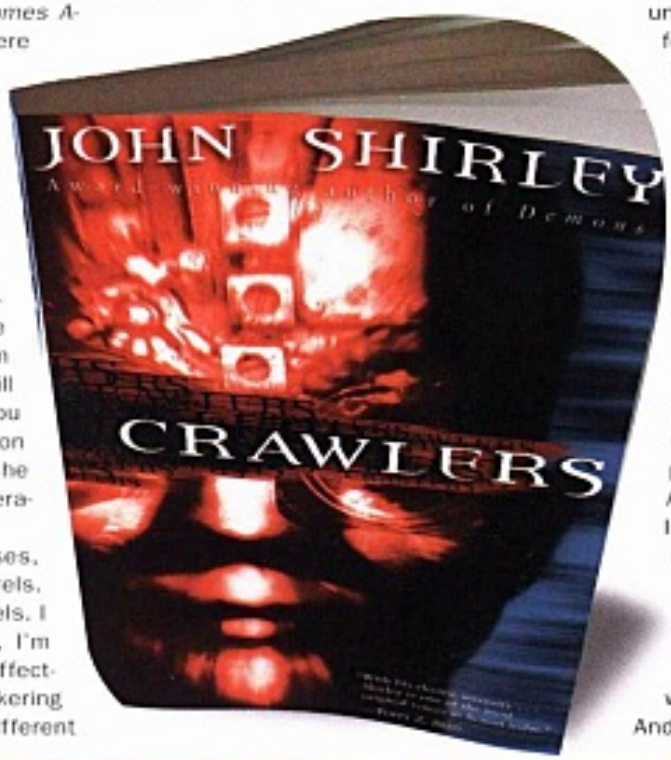
and started clubs out there in the late 70s and samples of that stuff can be found at the John Shirley website [www.darkecho.com/JohnShirley/], there's a whole music page for downloading going from 1978 through to 2003; and I write lyrics for the Blue Oyster Cult, the most recent two albums, [Curse of the Hidden Mirror, Then and Now]. I have always incorporated some sort of musical sensibility into my novels especially in the earlier cyber punk things like *Eclipse* and *City Comes A-Walkin'*, some of the characters were always rock musicians and their lyrics were always found in the books. And I tried to get a sense of that rock energy and feel in the very prose itself with a lot of my fiction at least in novels like *Eclipse Corona*, for example."

This earlier work is still available, too, though published through smaller companies. "The *Eclipse* books are still in print, you can get them from Amazon, *City Come A-Walkin'* is still out there. And *Black Butterflies*, if you like dark fiction, that's the one that won the award and it's a cheap edition," he laughs. "That's an important consideration."

Even following two new releases, Shirley isn't one to rest on his laurels. "Well, I've got plans for different novels. I haven't decided which one to write, I'm like a compass needle that is being affected by a magnetic field right now, flickering back and forth between these different fields of endeavor. I'm thinking of a novel called *Food* about when North America is stricken by famine in the near future and why that would happen and what could happen socially and it would be a very scary story and I think not unrealistic. And I'm also planning a novel called *The Other End*, which is sort of an apocalypse story that is about the end of the world but a good apocalypse. It's a response to those Christian Fundamentalist apocalypse novels, the *Left Behind* books. I haven't read them very much but I've gotten a sense of what they are, to me they're so full of crap they need responding to." Shirley is adamant about this. He doesn't get on a religious high horse; he simply looks at the historical context. "They don't even understand their biblical history. The book of Revelations was really about the Roman Empire; it had nothing to do with projecting 2000 years in the future. They're totally confused."

This brings Shirley to a common theme in his tales, of consciousness, of knowledge of self. One can see it in *Crawlers*, as those who don't follow blindly are able to survive, and in *Demons*, where the spiritual self is examined.

"People are subjected to a Rorschach ink blot effect where the things they see are their own personal agenda on the pattern in front of them unless they're careful to be discriminating and conscious about it. And one theme that keeps coming up in my books is degree of consciousness. I think that when people develop their consciousness more they have the possibility of becoming more than machines, otherwise they become crawlers. And there's also sheer consciousness, in terms of being more present in the moment, it has a spiritual component to it."



The spirituality of *Demons* is many fold, there is no one religion that is the answer to their problems. And that's important to understand, as Shirley explains, "Well, different belief systems have common roots, I think. They diverge a lot, sometimes they diverge destructively - you have Hindu people fighting in the street with Muslims in India and I'm afraid that someday we will have Christian fundamentalists fighting Muslim Fundamentalists like the Crusades but it's an irony. If you trace back the roots of those beliefs, the real meaningful core of each of these religions is about uniting with the cosmos, and consciousness, and brotherhood and the capacity for forgivingness and those things are universal in all religions and really what people should turn to I think. It's what Aldous Huxley called the 'perennial philosophy.' I admire Huxley," John Shirley says of the *Brave New World* author, "and I'm not the masterful writer that he is, but he is the sort of model for me."

To read, perchance to think, is what Shirley wants from his audience. And they will not be disappointed. Ⓥ

"USUALLY IN MY STORIES, THINGS ARE PRETTY BLEAK."

Stone's Throw

Take the train and hide your secrets with the Mysterious Traveler

By Patrick Keller

That dirty little secret you keep hidden away... Was it something you did? Or perhaps something you failed to do? Maybe it slipped away, forgotten, to hide in your memory. That would make you one of the lucky ones... these secrets haunt some people their entire lives, forcing them to relive that moment when everything went wrong each time they close their eyes. Maybe it left some tangible evidence, a scar perhaps, or maybe just a dead look behind their eyes peering back through the mirror.

Whatever the outcome... he knows. That's his gift, and his burden. One way or another, the story will be told, and justice will be served. He is the *Mysterious Traveler*, and he's got your number.

Or, at least, Moonstone Comics does, which in its relatively short lifetime has managed to publish licensed comics based on some of the most intriguing characters in recent history, names like TV's *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* and Lee Falk's *The Phantom*, as well as the aforementioned *Traveler*, just to name a few. All this was a long way off, however, when the company first leapt onto the scene, the result of some bad luck and good timing, as well as the friendship of three young comics pros. "Joe [Gentile], Rafael [Nieves] and I met many moons ago, no pun intended," says Moonstone co-publisher Dave Ulanski. "Community service assigned us all to do some work at Comico/Northstar, a now-defunct comic publisher here in Chicago. We went on to join up with an up-and-coming company called Bad Seed, with the interest of having an avenue to publish some personal projects we were all working on. Unfortunately, Bad Seed up-and-went before it really got off the ground, and we found ourselves with some completed books on our hands, but nothing to do with them."

In a fit of inspiration, fellow co-publisher Gentile says, "we just decided to do it ourselves."

First, however, they needed a moniker. "'Moonstone' was the name Dave, Raff and I came up in the car as we were driving through Chicago late — very late — one night," Gentile continues. "We were just vamping on names when Raff, I believe, just said the name. It seemed to just fit." Perhaps drawing inspiration from their twilight-dwelling namesake, the founders dived straight into the horror/dark humor realm, releasing creator-owned titles like *Mister Nightmare's Wonderful World*, *Evil Man* and *Dark Cloud*. Still, Gentile says, "most retailers didn't know we existed. We didn't have any names on our roster, with the exception of Raff, who wrote Hellstorm for Marvel." Which is not to say that Nieves was the only one with professional comics experience. Gentile had extensive freelance credentials from Now Comics, Comico, Slave Labor and First Comics, among others.

Still, Moonstone faced an uphill battle as a publisher of primarily creator-owned work from lesser-known creators. "We never made a dime, but it was all about working together and getting the books out. It was fun and maddening at the same time." And so Gentile decided to up the stakes.

"About three years ago, I got to thinking about what kind of comics I want to read, books that were not being done at the time. That led me to think about the acquisition of some licenses, with the idea that we could get noticed easier if we put out something with a title that somebody had heard of before."

His cohorts, however, took a little while to warm to the idea. "I raised a suspicious eyebrow at first," Ulanski reveals. "I heard dealing with licenses could be a wicked pain in the spleen. But as it went on, I learned that it's that and so much more! Nightmares, I say!"

And thus Moonstone, phase two (pun intended), was launched with properties like Kolchak and The Phantom, names intended, Gentile says, "to grab the gamers, mystery & horror readers and pulp enthusiasts."

This approach has its downside, however. "Deciding which licenses to go for was easy. Obtaining licenses was the most difficult, time-consuming, brain-numbing, money-draining thing, each one involving 7000 phone calls, not to mention lawyers, contracts and sedatives," Gentile recounts, with no small amount of weariness. "There were three characters that we really wanted very badly," he continues. "They were supposed to be part of our flagship roster of characters, but various legalities and silliness got in the way. One character was the whole impetus for me starting up these licenses to begin with, and we just couldn't get it done!

"We spent two years trying to get our first target," a hero whose title starts with "A" that Joe calls the founders' "favorite character of all-time, but it just became a matter of money. The amount we would have to spend far exceeded any hope of what we would get back in return. The contract was loaded with extra costs that extended years beyond the term of our publication rights.

"So our second quarry," a well-known character with a very cool car, "became a problem because of the supposed movie deal that was pending. When a new licensor took over the property, it became a chess game of a king versus a pawn. We all know who wins that one."

All the many setbacks... one might be forgiven for wondering how the company survived. Merely through tenacity, the Moonstoners finally caught a break. "It was the White Wolf stuff," says Gentile, referring to the role-playing game company, publisher of *Vampire: The Masquerade* and *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*. "The licensor was very eager to get the project moving. Once we got that, we were able to get [other] things going." Moonstone quickly found itself working with such comics veterans as Tom DeFalco, Steven Grant and William Messner-Loebs, as well as novelists like C.J. Henderson and Stuart M. Kaminsky. "Picking creators was fun for a while. We knew a lot of people in the industry, so we had many contacts."

Not that it always worked out. "There's always personnel decisions that, in hindsight," Gentile says diplomatically, "should have gone another way." Which might explain why he chose to take the writing reins of the Mysterious Traveler himself. The character

has a small but devoted group of fans who remember the radio show from the 40s and 50s, of which Gentile counts himself as one, albeit second generation. "I first heard the show about 20-some years ago. At first, I was just into listening to The Shadow. But after listening to and reading everything I could about him, I found all of these other shows I'd never heard of. Eventually I came across Mysterious Traveler...

"There was something particularly lonely about the character of the Traveler, something very dark," Gentile continues. "For reasons only a therapist would know, I found all of those elements fascinating. The show was filled with well-told tales of mystery, horror and suspense, with the narrator the only constant. And though I wanted to know more about him, as the episode wore on, I would get involved in the main plot, and anxiously await the resolution to that."

Adapting such a character to comics presents a unique set of challenges for Gentile and the Moonstone crew. Would it be best to present the Traveler as he was on the radio, largely an enigma with no past and no ongoing story, or would it better engage readers to finally fill in his backstory, at the risk of losing that mystique? Gentile admits there is a fine line to walk: "Part of the Traveler's charm is not knowing too much, you know? It is really difficult to explain him without ruining the fun. However, we've made the Mysterious Traveler more of an integral part of the story, which rarely happened on the radio show. Let's try to care about him, as well as the main story.

There was something particularly lonely about the character of the Traveler, something very dark.

"On the radio show, in one single episode, they mention his real name, John Smith. I used that. That is the only real clue we have to who the guy is. He had no 'abilities' that we knew of. But I wanted more when I listened to the show. [Passing] 'judgement' seemed the natural fit. That intrigued me." And so, instead of just presenting the tales of those unlucky enough to wind up on his train as he did on the radio show, the Mysterious Traveler now condemns or vindicates each one as well.

As if this wasn't a heavy enough burden, the Traveler in Moonstone's comics carries something else on his shoulders as well. "Whatever his past, something back there is just eating a hole right through him. He is a reluctant judge of character, but he feels that it's his penance or his 'job' to do so. He moves between accepting his lot, and raging against it. He is mysteriously human in his layers.

"Now, how do we show the story [he's] being told visually? That's where the Traveler's 'fast-forwarding' came in. It became a useful visual tool. Then, instead of being just a passenger on this train, I made him the only real passenger. Others only see him when it's time to tell their story."

With the story issues nailed down, Gentile was able to switch into his editor-in-chief hat and put together the book's artistic look. "I went through a couple false starts before Trevor Von Eeden fell into my lap. His enthusiasm and great layouts really helped provide a visual style to where I wanted to go." A long-time Marvel and DC Comics contributor, Von Eeden's art recalls Denys Cowan or perhaps Jon Bogdanove channeling Eddie Campbell in *From Hell* mode, with Ken Wolak's greytones giving the affair an eerie but realistic feel. "We're trying to keep the stories a small side-step *away* from reality. It's hard to say where we wouldn't go, but we're not looking to do any 'creature' or gore stories. Plus, we're trying not to overuse the supernatural. Sometimes the only supernatural element in the story is Mysterious Traveler himself."

One of Moonstone's goals since the beginning was to provide a complete, self-contained story within every issue, in order to encourage accessibility for new readers. For continuing fans, however, there are ongoing threads that weave through each issue, a conceit that will certainly be at work within the Mysterious Traveler series. "Eventually, the main stories will affect his state of mind as the books unfold. He is, like most of us, still capable of change.

"After the second issue, I have mapped out two other tales. At the end, I want to tie things up somewhat for the reader. We will delve into why he is on the train to begin with, and what the real truth might be on why he can't get off."

As for the rest of Moonstone, the path is a bit more solidly laid out, with projects of all shapes and sizes. "We have *Bloodlines*, a fully painted book by fantasy artist Monte Moore. *Pat Novak for Hire* is a wry noir tale of a tough senior citizen P.I. by Steven Grant and Tom Mandrake... a very cool book! Coming up soon is *The Cisco Kid*, a 'noir western' if you will, and *Soul Catcher*, a very cool supernatural heroine tale. We also have an upcoming *I Love a Mystery* project that will have old time radio fans buzzing.

"Man, that seems like a lot when everything's put together like that. I'm tired just thinking about it!" Well, Joe, as the Mysterious Traveler would likely tell you, there's no rest for the wicked... Ⓥ

"Do you want a story?"
"There's a million of them out there. You just got to know where to look."
"Now, I don't have to look."
"They come looking for me. They look and find me..."
So here we go...

DON'T FORGET, MY MINIONS - THE SIX-HOUR SHOCK THEATRE MARATHON BEGINS TONIGHT!
NO KIP I CAN'T! YOU DIDN'T SEE IT!
JENN, PLEASE! HONEY IT'S SWEEPS WEEK!!
STAY UP LATE WITH SPELLINORE - THE MOST WICKED WITCH IN TOWN!
THAT LETTER! OH WHY DID I READ IT?
LISTEN HON, THERE'S SOMEONE HERE...
SHE SAYS SHE KNOWS WHAT YOU SAW, SHE DESCRIBED IT PERFECTLY. COME IN, MISS...
-UH...
VAMPIRELLA.
OH. WELL.
STORY/ART
JEFF PARKER
HATE MAIL

VAMPIRELLA © & ™ 2004 ARMED WORLD & IDW LLC. BLACKBURNE CONTINUANT © 2004 HEROES & BANALITY. CHARACTERS © 2004 FROM LITTLE, DEAD @ 17™ & © JOHN HOWARD. SPELLINORE © & MOONLIGHT © 2004 LAUREL K. HAMILTON. JACKET PHOTO: © DEBY YORK/DESIGN SAVED STEVENSON. THE TASTE © 2004 JEFF MARIOTTE. ELVIRA'S CAR PHOTO: ™ & © 2004 ELVIRA MISTRESS OF THE DARK.

YOUR PRODUCER GAVE ME ONE OF THE WARNING LETTERS SENT TO YOU.
THE GLYPH IS AN OBSCURE CONJURER'S SYMBOL- THE WRITER IS LIKELY AN ACTUAL WITCH.
YEAH, I GOT THAT NOW, THANKS. BUT WHY DO THEY WANT ME?
WELL JENN... YOU DID TAKE A FEW SHOTS AT THEM...
WHOO, FANS, IT LOOKS LIKE WITCHES LOCAL 417 IS STILL MAD AT YOURS TRULY!
"DESECRATOR! YOU BESMIRCH THE NAME OF WICCAN! YOU SHALL KNOW THE POWERS OF DARKNESS..." - IT GETS HARD TO READ AFTER THAT, FOLKS... SOME GREASE STAINS...
- I THINKS THEM WICCANS LIKE FRIED CHICKENS!
"THE NEXT NIGHT AFTER WE FINISHED TAPING, THAT THING APPEARED... IT TRIED TO PULL MY HEAD OFF!!"
"IT'S CALLED A GALLUSITE. A RECREATED ASSEMBLAGE OF DEAD MEN, ANIMATED BY A HEX AMULET."

IT'S ATTACKED OTHER WOMEN IN THE AREA, AND I TRACED IT TO THE EPICENTER...
YOU.
OMIGOD,..
OMIGOD,..
THIS COVEN'S BEEN NO THREAT IN THE PAST, BUT NOW THEY NEED TO BE BROKEN UP BEFORE SOMEONE IS KILLED.
I NEED YOU TO LURE THE CREATURE OUT SO I CAN TRACE IT TO-
NO
WAY.
I AM NOT GOING BACK ON. THAT'S IT FOR SPELLINORE!
NOW CALM DOWN JENN... TONIGHT'S THE MONSTER MARATHON, ALL OUR ADVER-
NO NO NO!
YOU DIDN'T SEE THAT THING!
USELESS.
...SNIFF...
-IF I MIGHT SUGGEST AN ALTERNATIVE ...

21
AT LAST, I FEEL FOOLISH.
YOU LOOK GREAT! JUST LOOK INTO THE TELEPROMPTER AND FOLLOW MY CUES.
PHUHF
GREETINGS BOYS AND GHOULS! I AM DARK DESIRA, QUEEN-
-UGH.
??- THAT'S NOT ON THE PROMPTER...
LISTEN, VIDEO THRALLS. INSTEAD OF READING A BOOK YOU'VE CHOSEN TO LET YOUR BRAIN MELT BEFORE THIS SCREEN ALL NIGHT.
VERY WELL. YOU SHALL RECEIVE THE ENTERTAINMENT YOU DESERVE.
OUR FIRST FEATURE CONCERNS A MAN CURSED BY A GYPSY WITCH TO BECOME A WEREWOLF...
WHAT?! SISTERS, WHO IS THIS?
BLESSED BE!
WITCHES, BY THE WAY, ARE OFTEN FAT.
HERETIC! SHE TAUNTS US TOO!

SHE'LL LEARN- AS DID THE TRAMP BEFORE HER!
OHH.. THIS SPELL TAKES HOURS.
... FROM THE DEPTHS... ONE FROM MANY... RISE, GALLUSITE, RISE!!
A NEW TARGET. THE SAME PLACE.
GO FOR HER!
AND THAT WAS WHAT HOLLYWOOD THINKS A VAMPIRE IS
THE ORIGINS ARE NOT ACTUALLY IN THE CARPATHIANS. VAMPIRES WERE DOCUMENTED FIRST IN EARLY SUMER.
BUT IT IS OFTEN TRUE THAT THEY HAVE AMOROUS SOCIAL LIVES. QUITE THE OPPOSITE OF SAY...
WOW, THIS CHICK IS GOOD.
... WITCHES.

FASTER! GET HER!
OUR PHONES ARE RINGING OFF THE HOOK! YOU'RE GOING TO FINISH THE SHOW, AREN'T YOU?
SORRY. AS MUCH AS I HATE TO GIVE UP SHOWBIZ...
RRRAAAARR
-IT APPEARS MY DATE HAS ARRIVED.
NO!! GET AWAY FROM IT!
RAHRRRR
NO!!! SOMEONE, -HELP!!!

RRRRR
IT SEEMS THE COVEN FORGOT TO INSTALL A BACKBONE IN THEIR AVENGER.
HELL YES, GIRL!
WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW?
RRRRRRRRRR
FOLLOW THE MONSTER BACK TO CASTLE FRANKENSTEIN.
SISTERS! HE HAS RETURNED!
BUT HE... HE'S BROKEN.
WE CAN FIX HIM.
AS LONG AS HIS—
...HEX IS INTACT.
LADIES. YOUR CONSTRUCT HAS BEEN HURTING PEOPLE.
N-NO! WE...
WE DIDN'T MEAN—
WE JUST WANTED TO SCARE SPELLINORE!
CRUNCH

YOU WANT A SCARE?
YOU WANT TO SEE THE POWERS of DARKNESS?
"...YES, IT SEEMS THEY'VE ALL RENOUNCED WITCHCRAFT. YOUR HOSTESS SHOULD BE QUITE SAFE NOW."
: GREETINGS BEASTIES, SPELLINCRE HAS RETURNED FROM THE SPIRIT WORLD. THANKS TO MY SISTER DARK DESIRA FOR WATCHING OVER MY CRYPT.
OUR TALE TONIGHT: AN EGYPTIAN PRINCE WHO BECAME A MUMMY.
..THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR OFFER, BUT I ALREADY HAVE A JOB.
-AND THIS IS IN NO WAY MEANT TO RIDICULE OR DEFAME ANY ACTUAL MUMMIES...

NEW BLOOD

TAKE A BITE INTO SOME OF THE NEWEST COMICS OFFERINGS

Drawing blood this month are a few hard working creators putting in time on SOME brand new books. Two of those titles are new adventures with some-what familiar characters, and the third brings forward one of those questions to which everyone has their own answer. Without further ado, let's spend some quality time in the mines with Beau Smith & Wynonna Earp, *John Rozum &* Midnight, Mass, *and Steven Grant &* My Flesh is Cool.

WYNONNA EARP

Why would a pretty young thing like Wynonna Earp choose to wear a badge and chase down big nasties as a day job? Well, it's in her blood. According to creator/writer Beau Smith, his first series from 1995 "introduced Wynonna Earp as a descendant of Wyatt Earp from an affair that he had with a young actress in Hollywood in the early 1920's."

She "followed her ancestor's boot steps into law enforcement. She even worked for the police in Arizona before she was recruited for the U.S. Marshal Corps covert 'Black Badge' division."

It's this "Black Badge" division that spins the tale from traditional crime story to something a bit more dastardly. The "Black Badge" was created by President Theodore Roosevelt to combat the underworld of paranormal crime

Her first time out, Wynonna was responsible for "shutting down redneck, trailer trash, drug running vampires known as El Immortalaidad. They were the black sheep of the vampire nation. They could walk during the day. They had George Hamilton tans and flaunted them. They were manufacturing a new designer drug called Hemo that gave the person amazing strength and a huge high for 24 hours...then it killed you."

There was also a global scale to the first series, illustrated by Joyce Chin, Pat Lee and Mark Irwin. The young Marshal fought "the Egyptian Mafia and their huge Mummy enforcer, Raduk - Eater Of The Dead."

Just another typical day at the office, of course, and Smith confirms that. "She never panics and is so cool and composed under weird and stressing situations. Wynonna is a lot like her ancestor, Wyatt Earp. He always said that the best shot is the one that takes his time, aims at his target and kills it...or clubs it in the head before it knows what's goin' on. Wynonna is like that. Very sure of herself and her abilities."

This newest story, *Home on the Strange*, has one storyline and that borrows from Wyatt Earp's history, specifically the Fight at the OK Corral.

"It seems that Curly Bill Brocius, Ike Clanton, Tom and Frank McLaury and the rest of 'The Cowboys' aren't quite dead," notes Smith. "It seems that they had made some sorta deal for immortality. A deal with a catch: They would be immortal as long as their biggest enemy was dead...that being Wyatt Earp."

So, these immortal outlaws made their way to California as the original Earp was about to die, just to make sure. The writer explains, "It all goes their way except for a couple of small things. One, that they didn't know Wyatt was gonna have a child, and two, that he made a very cryptic promise as his last breath came out of his body.

"Many years go by and we end up in present time. Now, Curly Bill and the rest of 'The Cowboys' head up the global paranormal crime family. Curly Bill and the boys have been enjoying a fruitful time building a huge global syndicate, but it seems that their immortality is getting weaker."

And they know it's all because of Wynonna. Once "The Cowboys" get a bead on her, they put a contract out on her and soon, the Blade Badge Marshall is being pursued by just about every monster in the world. A bizarre case of the hunter becoming the prey. But, naturally, in the way any good Beau Smith story ends, "It all will come down to a showdown."

This five-issue miniseries is available from IDW Publishing.

MIDNIGHT, MASS

The release this winter of *Midnight, Mass – Here There be Monsters* marks the return to horror comics of one of its most under-appreciated voices: John Rozum. Previously best known in the 90s for his work on *X-Files* for Topps Comics, Rozum reminded everyone in 2002 what he was capable of with the first *Midnight, Mass* series. In it readers were introduced to the world famous husband/wife adventurers, The Kadmons. The series follows their exploits investigating and at times pacifying the paranormal. Yet their relationship, portrayed warmly and lovingly by Rozum, serves as the series' driving engine.

"They truly complement each other," he says. "Because of their fame in their occupation, they need to maintain strong, confidant, public personas, but when they are alone with each other, they can let their shields down and express their doubts and fears to one another and find strength in one another."

That first series struggled to find an audience and was cut short at eight issues. Since then, producer Joel Silver (*Alien vs. Predator*) bought the rights to adapt the concept for television prompting DC/Vertigo to give the series a second chance.

Here There be Monsters opens with Magellan, leader of an exiled tribe of monsters exhorting his followers to reclaim what was once theirs. "We can stop wandering, and sleeping under bridges and rocks, and eating their garbage," Magellan says. "We will have heat, electricity and running water and we will have food to eat and beds to sleep in. We will have a place we can call home." It doesn't matter that some of those he speaks to have tentacles in their faces and bare saw-like teeth when they grin. Rozum's managed to put a remarkably human face on what is so monstrous and otherworldly. "I think that by con-

WYNONNA EARP © ™ AND © 2004 BEAU SMITH. MIDNIGHT, MASS: HERE THERE BE MONSTERS IS ™ 2004 JOHN ROZUM AND DC COMICS. MY FLESH IS COOL ™ AND © 2004 STEVEN GRANT

trasting the fantastic against the real, or incorporating the fantastic into the real makes it much more effective," Rozum says. "Mike Mignola [creator of *Hellboy*] told me that the one moment that summed up what he liked about *Midnight, Mass* comes in the new series when Julie has her Starbucks cup sitting on a coffin lid while she stakes a vampire. I think he's right, it's getting the fantastic and the mundane to dance together which makes everything seem more believable."

While many might view this as a difficult trick to pull off, Rozum's managed to make the juggling act seem so easy. – BA

MY FLESH IS COOL

Before we get too far into it, let's let writer/creator Steven Grant explain his new book in 40 words or less:

"*My Flesh is Cool* extends from a simple premise: what would you be willing to do if you could do pretty much anything you wanted to anyone, and no one could even trace it back to you?"

Grant, the writer who gave Punisher his punch and who is not afraid to back down from strong political beliefs within his work (check out *Badlands*), asks this question, just as everyone has always asked themselves. But he explores it with a science fiction twist and a criminal mind. His protagonist, Evan Knox, is "a nice guy, the sort of person it'd be fun to have lunch with. But that's the thing: at any given time, Evan Knox could be anyone. When he's himself, he's a nice guy. When he's someone else, he's inconceivably dangerous."

And that's where the fun begins. Knox is a freelance assassin who works for a corporation, taking care of "problems."

"The way he does this is through a designer drug that allows him to throw his mind into anyone else's body, so they become the triggerman," Grant explains. "He's inside, running the show, but all the world sees is them, and they have no memory of his being there when he goes."

Which sounds like the perfect plan with the perfect outcome: do the job, get paid, someone else takes the rap, as you never leave the comfort of your own bed. Of course, as history has shown, something that sounds too good to be true, usually is.

"Evan thinks he's shielded from consequences of his actions, but he realizes someone's hunting him.

"Though apparently immune to the consequences of his actions, those consequences unexpectedly come back sideways, to bite him and the entire country hard. The series rapidly mutates over the three issues."

The story that *My Flesh is Cool* tells can't be defined easily. "Part one appears to be a nice little crime story," the writer says, "but by the time part two opens it has become a science fiction story, which pretty quickly becomes a horror story, which, by the middle of part three, blurs back into being a crime story. It's a fast moving action-filled meditation on identity and responsibility."

My Flesh is Cool can be seen almost, but not quite, as a companion piece to another recent project of Grant's. "*Mortal Souls* was much more a traditional horror story than *My Flesh is Cool* is, which is why the description of MFIC gets a little blurred. The MFIC concept is a science fiction concept – being able to throw your mind into other people's bodies – but what happens is fairly horrific.

"*Mortal Souls* is about life and death, with a new breed of monsters with their own evil agenda. The Qelipoth in *Mortal Souls* are the husks of the dead, former humans whose spirits have died, and what remains is pitiless and very nasty, but they're not 'hide in the shadows' type monsters; what we don't realize is that the dead rule the world and they hate us. *My Flesh is Cool* is about responsibility, and all the monsters in it are human. Evan is, in his own way, a monster, but he's also the good guy, the hero of the story. The shades of morality aren't anywhere near as cut and dried in MFIC as in *Mortal Souls*."

Both *My Flesh is Cool* and *Mortal Souls* are available from Avatar Press.

VAMPIRELLA® © & © 2003 Harris Publications Inc. All rights reserved.

HAUNT YOUR BOOKSHELF

Vampirella Nowheresville HC
Collects Vampirella #1-3
written by Mark Millar
art by Mike Mayhew

Vampirella #1-3 Model Covers Set
Set of all 3 Photo Covers
Limited to 1,500
by Millar & Mayhew

Vampirella Horror Classics HC
Collects stories by Morrison, Loeb,
Gonzales, Sale, Timm and more!

Vampirella Lives Hardcover
Collects #1-3 plus Epilogue
by Ellis, Conner, Palmiotti

Item		Quantity	Price
Vampirella Nowheresville Hardcover	$12.95		
Vampirella Horror Classics Hardcover	$19.95		
Vampirella Lives Hardcover	$19.95		
Vampirella 1-3 Ltd. Photo Covers Set	$19.95		
Shipping & Handling (US orders only)			
$3.95			
NY state residents add 8.25% tax			
Total			

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

I AM PAYING BY

CHECK ☐ MONEY ORDER ☐ VISA ☐ MC ☐

CARD # EXP DATE

SEND YOUR ORDER TO:

VAMPIRELLA LIMITED PREMIUMS
1115 BROADWAY 8TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10010

OR FAX YOUR ORDER TO: 212-620-7787

PLEASE ALLOW 4-6 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY. OFFER EXPIRES 10/31/03

CANNIBAL CORPSE

THE WRETCHED SPAWN

Includes FREE Bonus DVD "The Making Of The Wretched Spawn"

In stores 2/24/04

"The Wretched Spawn is a masterful killing spree which sees Cannibal Corpse's non-stop death machine combine technical genius and precise passion, pushing the band years ahead of any competition." - "Metal" Tim Henderson/ Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles

See them live on tour Febuary 2004

Check local listings for show dates or visit www.metalblade.com for more info.

Also available:

GOREROTTED
"Only Tools And Corpses"
"With their sophomore album Gorerotted have shown that the relentless hard work that they've put into their career does indeed pay off and here's to the next splatter fest of delights."
-Terrorizer 8 out of 10

FRAGMENTS OF UNBECOMING
"Skywards: A Sylphe's Ascension"
Highly anticipated melodic death metal album from Germany

Coming Soon!

CATTLE DECAPITATION
"Humanure"
"The San Diego-based quartet focuses on creating gory grindcore with a subversive twist... Cattle Decapitation have the determination to take their charged death metal to the masses." -Guitar World

©2004 Metal Blade Records Inc.
FOR A FREE CATALOG WRITE TO: Metal Blade Merchandise 4025 E. Chandler Blvd., PMB 70-D7, Phoenix, AZ 85048
www.metalblade.com • www.cannibalcorpse.net

BY ZENA TSARFIN

YEAH, HIM!

FROM THE COLD RECESSES OF FINLAND COMES HIM, WITH METAL TO BURN YOU UP

No strangers to stardom in Europe, Finland's HIM (rumored to stand for His Infernal Majesty) are finally ready to conquer America with their melancholy brand of keyboard-soaked, Goth-influenced Metal. Led by charismatic crooner Ville Valo, the band already has three albums under their belts, the second of which, *Razorblade Romance*, serves as their Stateside introduction. We recently spoke to Ville about the finer points of Love Metal and elective surgery.

VAMPIRELLA MAGAZINE: Are you excited about finally getting exposure in America?

HIM: Of course! Loads of our idols came from there, so it's a very important jump for us. We've been touring around Europe for so long, we need to see new places and meet new people with new accents.

VAMP: Who are some of those idols?

HIM: I grew up with '80s music like W.A.S.P., Twisted Sister and Duran Duran. The common element with those groups was their big, catchy melodies. Music's always about chords and melodies—it has to be a song you can play around a campfire.

VAMP: I'm surprised you didn't mention any '80s British Goth bands.

HIM: Our gloomy sound comes more from Johnny Cash and Black Sabbath than from Sisters of Mercy or any '80s Gothic rock.

VAMP: You call your music Love Metal. What exactly does that sound like?

HIM: It has the sensibilities of Roy Orbison and Cat Stevens meeting the macho sides of Manowar and AC/DC.

VAMP: How does your Heartagram icon fit in?

HIM: It's a mixture of a pentagram and a heart, it's like yin and yang. It symbolizes everything good and bad within us all. It's been great to see it inked on so many people's bodies.

VAMP: Even before the US release of *Razorblade Romance*, you'd amassed a substantial following, including Jackass' Bam Margera. Has he helped raise your profile?

HIM: Bam is a big fan, he even directed a couple of videos for our last album [*Love Metal*]. We became really good friends and he's been spreading the word in America—there are loads of skater kids getting into what we do. I'm really glad, actually, because I used to be a skater, and through that I got into bands like Black Flag and Bad Brains.

VAMP: At first, you had problems using your name here, going as far as releasing your first single as "HER." What happened?

HIM: There's an American artist [who uses the same moniker]. We said, Let's share the name, but he said he'd been suffering for his art for such a long time that he just couldn't do it. Then we paid him some money and we were HIM again—which is pretty weird after he'd been suffering for years.

VAMP: Were you contemplating any other solutions?

HIM: I had this plan with my friend, we were going to [have plastic surgery] and get fake titties and fake double chins for a couple of weeks, just check out how it feels.

VAMP: You'd be feeling yourself up all day!

HIM: [Laughs] It's horrible, but that's an indication of how little there is to do in Finland in the middle of winter. I'm a huge fan of Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and of Sally, especially. She got stitched up a lot, so it's not a problem. Ⓥ

HORRORPOPS: HELL YEAH
HELLCAT RECORDS

The band itself refuses to be categorized, though listening to *Hell Yeah* you can hear the good old fashion rock 'n roll blending with a heavy dose of rockabilly and surf music. It's fun, *Hell Yeah* is. And you can tell that Danish group HorrorPops is having a good time making it. "Horror Beach" is a surf spin, an instrumental play in the tradition of Dick Dale. The ska skill of "Girl in a Cage," the bounce of "Psychobitches Outta Hell," and even the sheer infectious silliness of "Cool Flat Top" showcase HorrorPops many influences and engaging sound.

One of the best parts of HorrorPops is that while it is recognizable as palatble pop, it's much better than what's out on the radio. Hell, Yeah is the kind of CD you pop in the car stereo system and just turn up, windows down, heading to the beach on a summer's day, or heading out for a road trip.

Infectous and proud, HorrorPops should be heard. Put it on and play it loud.

THE OFFSPRING: SPLINTER
COLUMBIA RECORDS

You know what The Offspring sounds like. You played "Pretty Fly, For a White Guy" over and over again, and kept laughing 'cause it's true. And now, *Splinter* comes out and the CD itself is fun. Pop that sucker in your computer and play the "Da Hui" video and then play it with Noodles' commentary. Yeah, you'll laugh. Then hit the MP3s and get the Hawaiian guitar sounds on "Kids" and the soulful clarinet instrumental on "When You're in Prison." No, really. You will. The words on the actual "Prison" 12th track are hysterical, and it's worth it to wait through the rest of the tracks to get to it. The more lyrical "Head Around You" and "Spare Me the Details" seem to tell part of the same so-called love story; and the rambunctious "The Worst Hangover Ever" is a rousing anthem announcing everything we've all said before. The Offspring envelops the more party attitude of surfers and skaters while still pulling in message pieces ala *Americana*'s "The Kids Aren't Alright." The radio released "Hit Me" doesn't do the album justice.

MURDERDOLLS:
BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE MURDERDOLLS
ROADRUNNER RECORDS

The Glam Metal field is wide-open and don't let anyone tell you different. Picking up from where Slipknot paused is Murderdolls, fronted by Slipknot's drummer, Joey Jordison, in this incarnation though he's maskless and a guitarist. The power and the anger and the irony is belted across by Wednesday 13, Jordison's co-conspirator on this project. While they get their fill on cussin', their love of the horror genre comes through with references to Frankenstein, zombies, and more, including the perfectly titled "Dawn of the Dead" and "B-Movie Scream Queen."

Honestly, though, you gotta love a band that can rip through a song called, "I Love to Say Fuck" and put it live on their DVD. Covering Billy Idol's "White Wedding"—and doing the video as an *American Idol* spoof—is trippy fun. While you don't get Idol vocal range out of 13, it doesn't really matter.

As a package, *Beyond the Valley of the Murderdolls* is worth the price of admission with six bonus tracks and the DVD with four videos.

Look, just go and have fun with it; it's what the Murderdolls would want.

WWE ORIGINALS
COLUMBIA RECORDS

Once upon a time the WWE was just a small wrestling company called the WWF. But these days, they publish books, produce movies andthey also make records! WWE Originals is the first wresting CD to actually feature original songs performed by WWE *Superstars*. The album is a compilation of songs performed by some of the biggest names in sports entertainment.

The question everyone seems to have is, why would anyone buy a CD featuring songs by a bunch of people who specialize in body slamming each other on a nightly basis. Well, the answer is simple: Vince McMahon has lost his mind. But one thing is clear, their fans will probably buy just about anything as evident from the sheer mountains of books and DVDs covering the past few decades of sports entertainment.

The CD actually has some entertaining moments. Kurt Angle's "I Don't Suck (Really)" starts off with the Olympic hero singing that he doesn't suck, followed by something that resembles rapping. Other highlights include tracks by Chris Jericho, John Cena and Rikishi. All but two of the tracks are written by James Johnston, the musical maestro responsible for most of the company's music including the entrance music for the wrestlers. The two true originals are by performers Lillian Garcia on her own "You Just Don't Know Me" and John Cena, along with DJ Chaos, on"Basic Thugonomics". Stone Cold Steve Austin throws in a few tracks of commentary between songs for added comic relief.

The package includes a bonus DVD featuring behind the scenes footage which is always entertaining. If you're a fan of the WWE, and don't mind dropping a few bucks on this goofy CD, enjoy.

LUNACHICKS

WHEN THE MOON IS FULL THEY RISE

Since the early days of Vampirella, many women have gone out of their way to portray the bloody vixen. At conventions, on Halloween, for photo shoots, for the Hell of it – it's been done time and again, with and without the prodding of others. Every month, you can meet one of these women who take their fandom to the next level. If you know of one, share. Send all packages to:

LUNACHICKS
Vampirella Comics Magazine
1115 Broadway 8th floor
New York, NY 10010

Alexxus Young loves horror. She loves all things related to the movies, the models, the fun, the feel. She is a fan and she adores the fact that she can be a part of it on every level. She takes her place among the wonders, placing herself on our cover and running the gauntlet to gain the name Vampirella.

Can you describe the process of creating your Vampirella costume?

I went around to a bunch of different shops here in Baltimore and I wanted to find something that was sexy but different from every other picture I've seen of people modeling the costume. I've seen some decent looking ones but then I've seen some really cheesy patent leather ones. I was working with Steve Parke and he said he'd be able to perfect the costume digitally. I also looked through the comic book to see all the jewelry she had. I noticed she had green eyes so I went and bought contact lenses. Then I went and got a wig and actually took the wig and set it on a foam head and cut the bangs off because it didn't look right. I bought these really nice stiletto boots and jumped into the character right away. It was so much fun.

What is the appeal of Vampirella? What is her place in comics?

She's sexy and dangerous at the same time and that is a major turn-on not just for males but for females too.

On your website (www.scifidiva.com) you talk about the role of women in science fiction. How do you see that role?

I think the whole genre of Sci-Fi/Fantasy and Horror films are dominated by males. I went online and looked up "Sci-Fi diva" and came up with names like Jennifer Lopez because she was in *The Cell*. She doesn't represent any of these genres like a female should. The females that I see wearing fantasy outfits say they know everything and they don't. There needs to be a female out there busting up the boys club and representing all three of the genres as best as possible. Since I was very, very young I was really big on sci-fi and horror and fantasy, video games, comic books, card collecting. I was a really big tomboy till I was 17. I've been reading comic books since I was 10 years old and I have a very large collection. I used to skateboard three miles every other day just to get comic books and cards. I've been just such an aficionado that I knew I would make it, no problem. I'm basically trying to bust up the boys club and show them what girls are all about.

You see yourself as a pioneer?

I am definitely a pioneer of the industry.

Which comics did you used to read?

When I was younger, I was really big into the old *X-Men* comics. I have the entire series of *X-Men* classic. I have one in mint condition; I've never opened it. Another I've read to shreds. And I have books so you can read up on all their abilities and powers. I was really big on *Excalibur*. Vampirella is one of my top female comic book characters, but my second favorite is Phoenix. I didn't read much else other than Marvel and DC and Harris. But I was big into Phoenix

Where do you see yourself five years from now?

I see myself the #1 female in all the genres [Sci-Fi, Fantasy, Horror]. Representing the femmes as much as I can, definitely being The Femme Fatale. I see myself directing films. I'm starring in a film this summer called *The Collector*, directed by Charlie Roggero , the four-time Emmy-winning producer. I'm also going to be helping him behind the camera setting up the shots and stuff. And there's supposed to be a film I'm shooting called *Rock Star Candy* set out in Arizona, shooting not this year but next year. I'm doing the Jerry Lewis thing: I star in it and I'm directing it, I'm doing the casting and helping on production. I got a very, very busy few years ahead of me. I'm not going stop. I'm at full force right now, so I'm very excited about my future. – *Boni Alimagno*

Photos/Art: Steven Parke

MTV | 2

HEAD BANG ERS BALL

THE RECORD:
2-CDs. 40 TRACKS.1 LOW PRICE.
The Definitive Hard Rock and Metal Collection of 2003

© 2003 MTV Networks. All rights reserved.

YOU HEARD 'EM ON THE HEADBANGERS BALL CD, NOW PICK UP THE FULL CDS

SHADOWS FALL

THE ART OF BALANCE

"SHADOWS FALL HAVE BECOME A TRUE GREAT METAL BAND. SKILLFULLY BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN AN ILLUSTRIOUS PAST AND ONE POTENTIALLY SCINTILLATING FUTURE. THIS IS NEW METAL - AND NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON" -SA KERRANG

ARCH ENEMY

ANTHEMS OF REBELLION

"WITH ANTHEMS OF REBELLION ARCH ENEMY BRINGS HOME IT HEARTMELT POSSIBLE TO WRITE MEMORABLE HOOK-FILLED SONGS WHILE STILL EXPANDING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE EXTREME." -CIRCUS

STRAPPING YOUNG LAD

S.Y.L.

"WHO RUNS IN THIS ELECTRONIC, LAUGHING COMES CHEAP... THE WORLD'S BEST METAL BAND!" -TERRORIZER

LACUNA COIL

COMALIES

"IN ONE WORD: INTOXICATING" -METAL MANIACS

SOILWORK

FIGURE NUMBER FIVE

"SOILWORK RULES. GOD KNOW IT, WE KNOW IT."
-CDU

IN FLAMES

REROUTE TO REMAIN

"IN FLAMES IS ONE OF THE BEST MELODIC DEATH METAL BANDS AROUND. THE IRON MAIDEN OF TODAY"
-PULSE

MESHUGGAH

NOTHING

"THE FIRST ALBUM FROM NUCLEAR BLAST RECORDS TO EVER CRACK INTO THE BILLBOARD TOP 200. IT HAS TO RANK AS ONE OF THE MOST EXTREME ALBUMS EVER TO ACHIEVE THAT FEAT."
-CDU

AVAILABLE AT SPEC'S MUSIC · fye · CAMELOT · TOWER RECORDS · CD WORLD · WHEREHOUSE MUSIC · STREETSIDE RECORDS

CENTURY MEDIA

Available in stores or go to www.centurymedia.com for online ordering or for more info and MP3's

NUCLEAR BLAST

Got everything but the music?

No problem - we'll give it to you.

Asleep By Dawn Magazine

FREE MAGAZINE
MUSIC CD
DELIVERY

The magazine, CD, and postage are all FREE thanks to our generous advertisers and our sponsors, such as IsoTank Music Mailorder

WWW.ISOTANK.COM

CDs, Shirts, Magazines, DVDs and more. Best selection & prices!

Request your free copy at www.asleepbydawn.com
Or send us a postcard: 526 S. 5th St., Philadelphia PA 19147

Free offer valid for residents of USA and Canada only

Model: Rachel Katz
Photo: Sandy Ramirez

Dracula's Ball®

The largest party of its kind in America. Bands, vendors & DJs from all over the world. Held four times every year.

LIKE THE CLUB SCENES IN BLADE...BUT REAL.

WWW.DRACULASBALL.COM

cover a

Vampirella Comics Monthly

003 52 pages

cover 2 cover

a bluejeff1954 scan

cover b